HARPER'S WEEKLY.

JOURNAL OF CIVILIZATION.

VOL. XXXI.—No. 1617.

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1887.

TEN CENTS A COPY.
WITH A SUPPLEMENT.

"AT LENGTH, HOWEVER, ALL WAS PREPARED, AND LORIMER, BEN DAY, AND TWO GUIDES, WITH EXTRA MULES FOR LUGGAGE, SET OUT ON THEIR JOURNEY."

THE BOOM IN "MADRE DE DIOS."

BY FRANK H. NORTON.

I.

IT was the day after a storm. The long line of white sand lay gleaming in the light of the morning sun; great crested waves rolled seething past the breakers, and so on to the beach, where they flung themselves with a dull sullen roar; sea-gulls whirled screaming above the waters, peering into the depths below for unwary fish. Above, on the slight elevation that rose gradually from the shore, the long white hotel, with its broad sheltered piazza; below, the steam-boat wharf, now filled with those who were about making their daily trip to the city, and those others to whom the two events of the day were the arrival and departure of "the boat"; and puffing and whistling in seeming desire to be off, the steam-boat itself. This was the scene.

Groups of ladies and gentlemen lingered near the gang-plank engaged in making their customary adieux. Sauntering promenaders strolled, or stood idly flirting, jesting, or what not. All the usual bustle of a fashionable watering-place in the height of the season was visible.

Two persons stood near together, apparently somewhat more seriously engaged than the butterfly throng about them. One was a man nearing middle age, tall, strongly made, forceful; the other was a graceful woman, refined, cultivated, with the nameless charm which breeding bestows endowing her lavishly. The one, as it were, subdued his manhood and his physical and mental strength in generous subordination to the sweet ideal of which this woman was the symbol and the expression; the other assumed her supremacy, and wore it, as it were a garment,

(*Continued on page 910.*)

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NEW YORK, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1887.

An ILLUSTRATED SUPPLEMENT *is issued gratuitously with this number of* HARPER'S WEEKLY.

MERRY CHRISTMAS.

THE holidays find the country peaceful, prosperous, and happy, and it is not without some just self-congratulation that we may perceive and state the fact. Our esteemed contemporaries among nations are ending the year amid serious troubles, and while we cannot fairly apply MONTESQUIEU's proverb to the situation, and find a little comfort in the misfortunes of our friends, it is still true that the roar of the storm without gives a certain charm to the snug comfort of the domestic fireside. England is engrossed and passionately divided upon the Irish question. France has just emerged from a crisis which aroused old and gloomy apprehensions. The prospects of the younger republic are fairer than ever before since the crisis ended tranquilly. But the result was not a triumph for the constitutional principle, because it was determined by a threat of disorder. The republic will be established in France when a crisis does not at once develop royalist intrigues, and when the municipality of Paris quietly acquiesces in the constitutional choice of any candidate whatever. Germany, with her nonagenarian Emperor and her mortally stricken imperial heir, her great statesman and her great soldier already old men, looks forward with natural apprehension to what a day may bring forth. Russia is always a mystery, and Austria watches doubtfully the lower Danube, while Italy moves on conscious that her fate is linked with that of states which she cannot control. The United States are singularly at peace, and even the prospect of the national election next year does not seriously excite or disturb the country. The only cloud springs from the excess of riches. While little Italy wonders how to fill her treasury, we are wondering how to reduce our revenue.

This is not the day of discussion in these columns. To-day and here we do not differ or argue, but exchange hearty congratulations upon all in which every American can agree. But the character of the perplexity in which we all know the wisest minds among us to be involved is a signal illustration of our condition. It is not an embarrassment which arises from extravagance, or wild speculation, or inflation. Business is sound and healthy. The statesman, therefore, who shall make us a Christmas gift of sagacious suggestion, and enable us to diminish our income with the least injustice to the welfare of any interest or of any citizen, will be the benefactor who may justly expect, if he will only clearly disclose himself, to be struck by certain lightning next summer. Meanwhile the holidays offer us on every side the infinite detail of pleasure, of which the stocking that Santa Claus has filled is the type. It is, indeed, the festival of children, but as we stroll through the streets especially devoted to Christmas shopping, and observe the lavish display made for the young people, a shrewd loiterer will suspect that in providing for the children the seniors have not forgotten themselves. There were never, for instance, so many elaborate and beautiful books for children as now. But is the child himself aware of the singular charm of the illustration or of the text? Did the child find more pleasure in the exquisite birds of BEWICK than in the rude and coarse cuts of Miss TAYLOR's *Original Poems?* When does the æsthetic sense develop? And are those who were trained upon the primitive illustrative art of half a century ago less able, because of that training, to enjoy so superb a work as the *Engravings on Wood*, which we mentioned a fortnight ago, and which, as the Albany *Evening Journal* truly says, is the choicest gift that could be offered to "a friend of artistic tastes," and which is also within "the realm of moderation in price"?

The essential value and beauty of Christmas gifts increase with the years. The old-fashioned *Keepsake* and *Annual* and *Souvenir* are quaint relics of a time which, although recent, seems to be almost beyond human memory. What a modest and moderate time it was! How far five dollars went toward Christmas giving! Did the little money buy less pleasure? Did Mr. NEWBERRY's penny picture-books give less delight, we repeat, than the children's books of to-day? No. But they would not give the same pleasure now, because the child lives among other conditions. And here the little Christmas sermon begins to preach itself. The seniors determine the conditions. If extravagance be the spirit of the time, the shrewd seniors must recognize it as an evil spirit, and lay it accordingly. Moderation, temperance, simplicity, modesty, and good taste are as good virtues as ever. They are eternally young. Old Santa Claus could leave nothing of more priceless value at every hearth than a choice collection of those qualities. Here are Uncle Sam's pockets bursting with his enormous income which he cannot spend, and the poor gentleman feels so rich that he is inclined to fall a victim to every sharper. He is besought on all sides. A respectable-looking person of a highly clerical aspect whispers in his ear that he can relieve him at once of a considerable part of his burden. Another eager adviser beckons to our harassed uncle to toss him a handful and the overweighted pockets will be materially lightened. The number of prospectuses of the most promising and benevolent enterprises which are thrust into his hands or bawled at him from a chorus of voices is countless. Our uncle wishes everybody well. But his experience has taught him that enormously rich men often do enormous mischief by their very generosity. He has not listened to his wise pastor for many a year without learning that the worst use that can be made of riches is to deprive a man of his manhood by preventing him from helping himself. He has been taught and he believes that to teach a man to depend upon himself, to make him frugal, industrious, honest, and temperate, is to be of truer service to him than to put a hundred dollars in his stocking. He suspects that it is one of the oldest doctrines in the world, but he is sure that the more generally it is believed and practised, the better it will be for him and for everybody else. "No," says Uncle Sam—and it is his Christmas reflection—"I won't spend my money so as to make other men poorer. To encourage extravagance and laziness, to make my nephews less self-dependent and self-respectful, and to tempt them to go begging, is not my notion of giving them a merry Christmas."

THE BOOM IN "MADRE DE DIOS."

[*Continued from front page.*]

gracefully. And none could have told of these two by their bearing that the one was fired by a passion which was the burden and yet the blessing of his life, while the other contemplated this and recognized it, yet only half relented from a purpose to which he was only an obstacle, the while she seemed to him to have sunk self in his behalf, and to be waiting but events to let her life bear testimony to her love and her fidelity.

The last bell of the steam-boat sounded its warning call, and the two clasped hands.

"I am poor; I may be absent long. Will you be true to me?"

"Is it possible that you doubt me?"

"No: you are the one being, Grace, that I cannot doubt. Good-by! God in heaven bless you, and keep you for me!"

He wrung her hand, sprang lightly upon the boat as the plank was withdrawn, and stood, hat in hand, watching her, as the gay little craft steamed out of the bay, round the point, and into the ocean beyond. While the boat was in sight, Grace Cameron stood where he had left her, looking after it, and occasionally waving her handkerchief in the direction of the fast disappearing figure. When his form could be no longer discerned she turned in the direction of the hotel, walking slowly and alone—alone, however, but for a moment. Before she had gained the end of the wharf a slight, graceful-looking young man stepped from behind a post and joined her.

"You did that exceedingly well, Grace." No answer, unless a scornful shrug of her pretty shoulder could be translated as one. The young man sauntered lazily at her side, flicking pebbles out of his way, as he walked, with a light cane which he carried. "Exceedingly well," he continued, musingly. "With a man like Lorimer, tears would have been absurd: they are bad form anyway. Of course to be jocular was not to be thought of for a moment: he is in earnest. Altogether, I commend you. Serious, but not dull; appreciative, without weakness: capitally well played."

"Do you know of what you remind me, Carl Brandegee?"

"Well, no, not precisely—at this juncture."

"A sneak-thief."

"Good heavens! Grace—Miss Cameron, take that back."

"I will not. You had not the moral bravery to pit yourself against Ralph Lorimer, man to man; but you have stolen in, like a thief in the night—Heaven knows how—and taken from him what was his, what he still believes to be his, and what he values more than life—my love. How you have done this, Carl, surpasses my comprehension. And that too after knowing you all my life! At this moment I contemn myself for that loving. Now go!"

He had recovered himself by this time, and lifting his hat courteously, he left her side and lounged across the lawn, away from the hotel, saying nothing. Grace turned a moment, and looked out toward the sea. Then she hurriedly entered the hotel and repaired to her room.

As Carl continued his walk along the sea-wall he reflected on many things. As for Miss Cameron's temporary ebullition of spite, he thought little of it. "It was beastly bad form, though," he said to himself; "but she will get over it, and be sending for me before sundown"—a prediction he might very well make, judging by previous similar instances, and yet in which he might easily be wrong.

It would have been difficult to define for which of Mr. Carl Brandegee's numerous peculiarities, idiosyncrasies, and characteristics this beautiful and intelligent young heiress had given him her heart, or imagined she had. Doubtless, however, her training had much to do with her views on the subject. Carl was, to be sure, an available *parti;* he possessed a large fortune, and had a valuable and growing *clientèle* in Wall Street, where he had the reputation of being successful, which usually brings success. He was, for this reason, a favorite with Cameron *père*, while Cameron *mère* delighted in him as a young man who was always in the way when wanted, and never at any other time; a good entertainer, good dancer, good diner out. Besides, his family was unimpeachable, he had no vices—the Camerons had known him from childhood—and Grace was apparently in love with him. The rare occurrence of a girl being in love with a perfectly irreproachable person, and the one selected for her by her parents, was enough in itself to make the situation simply charming to those interested. Carl was, however, a good deal more shrewd than the most of young men—even Wall Street young men—and there was one irritating fact which he did not in the least attempt to disguise from his own recognition. He was entirely sure that if Ralph Lorimer possessed his money and his business, he, Carl Brandegee, would never have the slightest chance either of retaining Grace's affections or obtaining her father's millions. He made no mistake about that. He knew better than Grace did her own lazy, tropical nature; luxurious, self-deceiving, wilful, and irrational. He knew also that while he had succeeded in causing her surface character to become predominant, it only required the right contact, conditions, and opportunity to sweep that away forever, and rouse from the depths her true womanly being. Carl was well informed concerning the difference between the surface and the under nature of humanity. He had been a capital study for himself in this regard during all his adult life. To those whom he met in society he was courteous, genial, somewhat reticent and quiet, but considered good company. In business he was sagacious, cool, and imperturbable, yet bold and aggressive. Under all this he was unscrupulous, wary, implacable when crossed, devoid of every single kindly quality. Behind an exterior manner which was calm and placid, apparently unemotional, there was a will that was indomitable, nerves of steel, and a heart of stone. He was a natural accumulator of wealth, without being a miser; ambitious of social position, jealous of interlopers, scheming, and cunning. He took heavy risks, and needed enormous wealth and vast credit to enable him to carry out plans which were gigantic. In his entire nature there was but one artistic flaw: he would not move until he got ready, nor vary his plans to suit the actions of other people. That was why he had not married Grace Cameron long before: if he had, this story could not have been written.

The Lorimer episode had been spontaneous, and under culture would have been lasting. Grace had met him while Brandegee was away in Europe, and while also the latter was still considered only an old friend of the family. A summer's association with Lorimer, just returned from a professional tour among the Colorado mines, had given Grace an entirely novel experience—intimate and constant association with a man who was calculated to be her natural ideal. Possessing a profound and comprehensive mind, Lorimer united with it the most delicate sensibility and a passionate nature, whose fire gave force and determination to the most absolute loyalty to love or friendship. Strong and brave, physically attractive, tender and gentle to all women, but exquisitely so to the woman he loved: no sooner had Grace discovered that she was the object of his love than her whole being seemed to go out to him as to one who was at once her lover and her master. But an untoward occurrence brought about separation; Carl returned, and learning what had happened, used all his ready wiles to overcome it; the necessity for love had been aroused, the lover was absent, and so the affair had reached the stage at which we find it.

II.

Ralph Lorimer was on his way to Lima, whence he was to proceed a few score miles into the interior of Peru, there to direct the operations of a party of miners already engaged in examining a claim which had recently fallen into the possession of Lorimer's employers and partners. For the young man had refused to undertake this journey and its succeeding labors without a fair interest in the speculation; and though actually in receipt of but a small salary, he was also the owner of a tenth share in the product of the mine he was about to work. For various reasons Ralph had communicated this latter fact to no one; and the elegant and worldly-wise young belle of two seasons—who had been drawn into her genuine though superficial attachment for her lover by his sympathetic qualities—had no hope for his future beyond his scant pay and the chapter of accidents. Moreover, she had little faith in her own career should she marry him, since her prospective possessions were dependent on the caprice of her father, to whose thinking Ralph Lorimer was an unpromising candidate for the situation of son-in-law to a millionaire banker.

From New York to Aspinwall by steamer, thence by rail across the Isthmus of Panama—that wonderful tropical journey whose romantic beauties even the iron horse and his burden cannot limit, nor the faintly possible canal constrain—and Lorimer found himself in the quaint, half-civilized town of Panama, whose old and new quarters bind together the civilizations of the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Here, while waiting a few days for the steamer to leave for Callao, Lorimer made the acquaintance of a quaint Yankee—a practical miner—whose name was Ben Day, and who, according to his own story, had mined all the way from Fraser River to Arizona, with varying success, sometimes having "yanked enough yaller metal to go down to 'Frisco and have a thunderin' big bust," and more times being in the same "'Frisco" a "hewer of wood and drawer of water," and a customary and impecunious patron of the numerous "free lunch" counters for which that hospitable city is famous. Just now Ben was "clean down," and anxious to get something to do "back of Lima," as he put it. He had worked his passage from San Francisco on a Pacific Mail steam-ship, and was half starving in Panama, waiting for luck. Lorimer took to the big-hearted, shrewd, half-childlike fellow, and perceiving from his conversation that he was really a competent, practical miner, and having the company's authority to make such an engagement, he determined to take him to Lima. The company's drafts on a Limanese banker gave him ample funds to accomplish this; and so, on the arrival of the steamer, Ben Day delightedly accompanied him on board, his entire luggage being contained in a canvas bag which he carried slung over one shoulder.

The delightful voyage south was made without any important incident, and in about four days our party were put ashore at Callao, the seaport of Lima. Lorimer was anxious to get to the locality where his men were at work, and so he hastened to engage mules and guides from Lima, whither he had at once repaired on reaching Callao, the latter city being only six miles distant from the capital. It required, however, a week's pretty constant effort and labor to arrange for the transportation of themselves and party. At length, however, all was prepared, and Lorimer, Ben Day, and two guides, with two extra mules for luggage, set out on their journey to the mountains. Their course lay first along the banks of the Rimac, a small stream which flows through the city of Lima; and thence, branching southeastward, directly into the Cordilleras, or Andes, through the noted pass to Pasco, near which

place, in the department of Junin, and fourteen thousand feet above the level of the sea, was the "Madre de Dios" mine, which was the object of Lorimer's journey.

The mine was an ancient one, worked, as Lorimer had been informed, perhaps before Pizarro; certainly, if local tradition could be believed, by the old Spaniards at the time of their invasion, in the sixteenth century. It had long rested unfruitful, but a suspicion of its value having reached the knowledge of certain New York capitalists, it had been quietly prospected to some extent during the year preceding the period of our story. The local superintendent had not made very encouraging reports to his employers, but the company had faith, and Lorimer, who had been educated as a mining engineer, had been engaged and sent out supplied with the necessary means to insure thorough and scientific operations.

On the evening of the arrival of the party from Lima, Mr. Hardy, the superintendent, was invited to a conference by Lorimer, which was held at the rough shanty which was the latter's residence: a log hut, containing but one room, with two bunks built on one side, near a fireplace—the latter needed constantly during the wet season; a rude table, and two or three chairs, and a clothes-press in one corner—these constituted what had been hitherto the manager's domestic establishment; and here, by the light of an oil lamp on the table between them, Lorimer and the superintendent held their conference.

"The fact is, Mr. Lorimer," said Hardy, after they had lighted their pipes as a preliminary, "since I wrote to the company I have made discoveries which materially change the aspect of affairs. I find now that I totally undervalued this mine. You see, the men who worked it before—maybe the Spaniards, maybe the ancient Peruvians—knew a great deal more about mining than we give them credit for. Whoever it was, worked pretty much as we do—dug a shaft, and laid out galleries at levels a hundred feet apart, and timbered carefully as they proceeded. We struck the 200-foot level about three months ago, having passed through rich ore, and cleared as we went along. But there we were stopped by what seemed to be the end of the diggin's—the bottom of the shaft, in fact—and as the outlook was not very rich, I reported as I did. Somehow, though, I was not altogether satisfied that this was the whole mine. Everything seemed solid enough under foot, but there was a difference in the lay of the bottom rock that made me think it had been at some time disturbed.

"I lay awake nights thinking this out; but it was no use, and I began to take soundings. We bored into the rock in different places straight down, as I did not care to regularly excavate unless my suspicion should prove true, believing that what was already exposed would pay for working at least. At last one day we hit it. The boring rod went plump through the rock, and struck into something totally different—soft—and which eventually proved to be—*wood*."

"Wood!" said Lorimer, surprised. "By Jove! I begin to see."

"Of course you do. The miners, forced for some reason to leave their work, had masked the approach to the real mine by setting solid rock over the workings, and covering this with refuse. This had also become solid in the course of centuries by the action of natural forces, and a perfect hiding had been the result. I knew you were coming out, and determined to wait your arrival before proceeding. But as soon as you are ready we will tackle the 'mask,' and if I am any judge, we will 'strike it rich.'"

"Of course you did right, Mr. Hardy, and we will go at it the first thing to-morrow. Tell off men you can trust for this, for it must be kept quiet."

"Well, I can trust any of them. With a view to this, I have watched my men, and have weeded out the bad ones. As to the natives, they pay no attention to anything but hoisting rock and water, which is what they are paid for."

"And, by-the-way," continued Lorimer, "make a place for the man I brought with me: Ben Day is his name. He is a practical miner, whom I found strapped in Panama, and from what I have seen of him I should judge he would be a useful fellow to you."

The superintendent looked at Lorimer steadily while the latter was speaking; then he appeared thoughtful for a moment. "I tell you frankly, Mr. Lorimer, one has to be careful whom he picks up on this coast. Every port is crowded with adventurers, and you can't in the least tell what you're getting from what they say. Suppose we have this man in till I look him over?"

Lorimer's countenance contracted into a slight frown. He was not in the least suspicious in his nature, and his experience of life thus far had not taught him to imagine an enemy in every new acquaintance. This was perhaps because his position had not rendered him open to attack; perhaps because he was right: who shall say?

"By all means call him in, Mr. Hardy," he said, coldly.

The superintendent saw plainly what kind of a spirit he had awakened by his suggestion of a doubt, but he was not the one to draw back from his purpose on that account. Stepping to the door of the cabin, he called one of the men, and directed that Ben Day should be sent to him, as Mr. Lorimer wished to see him.

"I don't want to see him," said the latter. "I am perfectly satisfied."

"Let me have my way, sir, please; it will do no harm."

"All right; go ahead;" and Lorimer proceeded to refill his pipe.

In a few moments there was a knock at the door, and in answer to Hardy's "Come in," the big fellow slouched into the cabin, with a short pipe in his mouth, and his hands in his breeches pockets, removing one of these, however, to take off his broad-brimmed, ragged Panama hat as he entered.

"This is Mr. Hardy, Ben, the superintendent," said Lorimer.

"Sarvent, sir;" and Ben executed a bow that doubled up his long frame, at the same time "taking in" Mr. Hardy with one keen glance.

"Sit down, my man," said the latter, pointing to a chair; and Ben seated himself accordingly. Then the following colloquy took place, Hardy asking the questions, and Lorimer sitting quietly and listening:

"Been mining, have you?"

"Rather."

"How long?"

"Since '58, when I started in at Fraser River."

"How old are you?"

"Forty-four, last March."

"Commenced young."

"Not very. I was twenty-two when I went up to Fraser."

Here Mr. Hardy went through a silent arithmetical problem.

"How did you make out at Fraser?"

"Poorly; it was a blamed fraud."

"But you kept on in that line?"

"Yes; I worked my way down into California, and kept at it."

"Make out any better?"

"Well, take one year with another, I did pretty well. Worked on wages there for a while, and then went up in Nevada. There I did pretty fair, spending my money as fast as I got it, and that brought me along to Colorado times, and then I made a strike. Staked out a claim that happened to be where Leadville is now, and sold out in the flush times, and had a bankful."

"That brings you along down to about '77 or '78."

"You just hit it. I sold out in '78, went down to 'Frisco, splurged around there ever since, and then slid down to Panama, thinking I'd get across, and work my way back to New York on a steamer. There I got stuck, though, and couldn't get across, unless I walked, and I was kinder waitin' round, with an eye in this direction, when I met Mr. Lorimer;" and he bobbed his head toward that gentleman.

"Do you know anything besides placer-mining?"

"Placer-mining!" (contemptuously). "Why, stranger, I worked on the 900-foot level in the Consolidated Virginia."

"All right: I guess you'll do: to-morrow I'll set you to work."

"Thank ye, sir. Anything else?"

"No, nothing more to-night. You can hunt up Collier; he's foreman of one of the gangs—any of the men will find him for you—and tell him I say he's to find you a place to bunk and give you rations."

"Thank ye, sir;" and with another scrape, Ben Day slouched out again.

"Well, Mr. Hardy, what do you think of him?" said Lorimer, when the door had closed, and the retiring footsteps were unheard.

"You will probably be surprised at my saying that I distrust the man."

"No, I am not surprised."

"Why?"

"Because I think you are naturally suspicious;" and Lorimer's face flushed a little as he spoke.

"Well, it's clear you are not, Mr. Lorimer, and I honor you for it. But it does not follow, as you might reason, that I dishonor myself in being suspicious. I was not naturally so, any more than yourself. The feeling has grown upon me through a hard experience. I know you won't ask me why I suspect your man there, so I will tell you. He tells a short story, to begin with. He never looks you square in the face—I know what you are thinking; Dickens said it once, I believe: something about unblushing effrontery staring modest honesty out of countenance, or words to that effect; but it don't always work, nor often. A man of the ordinary stamp—not a scholar nor a diplomatist, mind you—if he is honest, will look you straight in the eyes when you question him about his life. As to these others, their minds are usually working at cross-purposes with their words, and they are apt to look through you, or over you, or beyond you. If men are in the diplomatic line they can command their features to do what they please, but in the case of a man in the walk of life of this one it is different. And my impression is that he has much to conceal, and also that he has a purpose in being here at all. I should distrust him."

"You are more of a philosopher and student of human nature than I expected to find you, Mr. Hardy."

It was now the latter's turn to change color.

"I don't know if you mean that sarcastically, Mr. Lorimer." He said, quietly, after a moment: "But let that pass. I was not always in my present position. I have travelled much, and have seen many men: very many above my present position were once my associates. But you don't need to hear my biography; and as to this man, I will give him a chance, and we will test him. By-the-way, how did you make his acquaintance?"

"I saw him lounging about the hotel in Panama, and one day he spoke to me: said he understood I was going to Lima, and to have something to do with mining, and asked if I could give him any work. I liked his looks, and after I had questioned him about as you did, and felt satisfied—as you do not—I engaged him. He was of great help to me in getting my outfit."

"Oh, I guess he knows his business. How did he hear what yours was?"

"I never asked him."

"Did you talk much about it in Panama? Excuse my asking you, please."

"At the time he spoke to me I don't think I had mentioned it to any one in Panama. On board ship I certainly did not; and I was generally reticent, as you would naturally expect. Our business should not be talked about much—at present."

"Exactly as I supposed, Mr. Lorimer," said Hardy, quickly. "How do you suppose this man got hold of it?"

"Well, I am sure I can't answer that. Of course our bankers knew all about it. But it never occurred to me: you know those things seem to travel in the air. For instance—"

"Excuse me for interrupting you. Do you know if you have any enemies?"

Lorimer started.

"Why, what a question! What has that to do with Ben Day?"

"Never mind that: do you know?"

"I don't know that I have an enemy in the world. My life has been a very tranquil one. No, I don't believe I have."

"That will do," said Hardy. "I hope you will pardon what may seem to be impertinent curiosity; but I had a reason for it."

He thrust his hand into an inner pocket of his pea-jacket, and drew therefrom an old and well-worn wallet, from one of the compartments in which he extracted an envelop, which he handed to Lorimer, saying, as he did so, "Open it, please, and examine the enclosure."

The other opened the envelop, which bore no superscription, and took from it a fragment of paper which it contained.

It appeared to be part of a letter, soiled and rumpled. Lorimer read in it the following words, half obliterated, in a handwriting with which he was unfamiliar:

"Ralph Lorimer, 'Madre de Dios' mine; watch his movements, and the working of the mine, and communicate with me by every mail. If you should acquire important information, *do as I instructed you*, and leave at once for Panama, whence you can telegraph, and then return here."

In answer to Lorimer's anxious look of inquiry, Hardy said: "That piece of paper dropped from your friend's pocket as he was busy unloading one of the mules. I was alone when I picked it up, or I would probably have given it to him; as it was, I chanced to observe your name in it, and took the liberty of reading it."

"How do you know it dropped from his pocket?"

"I saw it, and he was searching for it as long as it was light."

"What is to be done?"

"Take a copy of it, and I will then place it where I will arrange for him to find it to-morrow; and I would say nothing about it, if I were you."

"I must say this deception is very disagreeable to me," said Lorimer.

"No doubt; but with this class of antagonist you can't stop to pick your weapons. More particularly when good ones are placed ready to your hand. Forewarned is forearmed, my dear sir, and your duty to the company requires you to protect its interests."

"Yes, you are right." And Lorimer seated himself and made a copy of the writing, to which Hardy signed his name as a witness of its accuracy. Then the latter took the original and replaced it in the wallet.

Before leaving the room, however, he turned to Lorimer and said, "Have you any idea who the writer is?"

Lorimer hesitated a moment before he replied; then he said: "No: there is only one man whom I could possibly suspect, and I have no reason to suspect him."

Hardy left the cabin a few moments after, and Lorimer went to bed in one of the bunks, the superintendent having taken up his quarters in another part of the camp.

III.

On the following morning Hardy had his gang of men ready at the mouth of the shaft at an early hour, where they were presently joined by Lorimer and the superintendent. The descent was made, and the men were at once set to excavating the bottom of the shaft, which Lorimer found in precisely the condition which had been represented to him. A mass of débris closely adhering together—so much so, in fact, as to present the appearance of cement—was first worked through, loosened, and sent up to the mouth of the shaft in buckets. Then the men attacked the solid rock beneath. It was, in truth, solid, though it was found that it was composed of separate pieces, which had evidently been previously hewn out elsewhere, and lowered to the place, where they had been closely fitted, forming a flooring about two feet in average thickness. Relays of men soon succeeded in disturbing this arrangement, and the solid blocks were taken out, one after another, and raised to the surface. This exposed exactly the situation which Hardy had expected. Beneath was an additional flooring of timbers, and this being removed, the shaft was found to continue to an unknown depth.

The two chiefs, however, at once informed themselves as to this depth, soundings being taken, which discovered bottom at one hundred feet below. Additional rope being put on the windlass and attached to the bucket, the latter was slowly lowered, with Lorimer and Hardy in it, careful observations of the rock being taken by the light of their lamps as they descended. The rock exposed was richly argentiferous, and the most uninformed inspection would have told that here was indeed untold wealth. On reaching the bottom the two explorers found that a gallery had been opened at this, which was the 300-foot level, but had only been pushed about twenty feet when the work had been stopped. Here tools were found of a kind totally different from those which had been in use among the early Spanish miners, and which Hardy recognized to be similar to those which he had seen in the Museum in Lima—in fact, those of the ancient Peruvians. The investigation having demonstrated the accuracy of the superintendent's impressions, and disclosed such a condition as fully warranted the development of the mine, the signal to haul up was given, and the two men were lifted to the next level. Here Hardy gave orders to the men who were in waiting to leave the shaft, and in a few moments all were again at the surface. Arrived there, Hardy called all the men about him, and announced that work would be resumed at once, and at the foot of the shaft. He made no disclosure regarding what condition had been found existing there, but the quick-witted miners needed none. They were all old hands, and the glance of intelligence which flew from one to the other expressed as clearly as if they had said it that they knew there had been a "find," and had a reasonable belief that it was a rich one.

At once the different gangs were told off, and presently the first one was sent down the shaft, and the labor of opening the new workings was begun. Hardy himself selected the men for the first gang, and Lorimer observed that Ben Day was not among them. He made no comment on this, however, as the two chiefs of the enterprise strolled back to quarters, and Hardy, who had waited for him to refer to it, at length opened the subject:

"You don't mind my handling your protégé in my own way for a few days, do you, Mr. Lorimer?" he said, with a smile.

"Certainly not; I have turned him over to you to do what you like with him. I wash my hands of him."

"I am afraid not. I suspect you have not got through with Mr. Ben Day yet by a long shot."

"Why not expose him at once?" asked Lorimer, suddenly stopping short and facing his companion. Hardy stopped also.

"I don't like this meddling with your affairs, Mr. Lorimer," he said, flushing slightly. "I don't like it any more than you do; and I would drop it at once, out of respect for your very proper feeling on the subject, but that the company is interested—gravely interested—in keeping this discovery quiet until such time as they see fit to disclose it.

"Yes; don't mistake me," he continued, hurriedly, seeing that Lorimer was about to speak. "I understand perfectly that that is also your interest and duty, if possible more than it is my own. But you are new to this country and to the ways of this class of men, and it is not with any improper motive that I venture to ask you to let me take charge of the matter."

Lorimer's rather clouded countenance cleared. "Do just what you think is right, Mr. Hardy, and I will not interfere. I have perfect confidence in you, while, to tell you the truth, my faith in that fellow is considerably shaken."

"Spoken heartily, and I honor you for it. Now let me tell you my plan so far. The man has got his letter back. I fixed that, to begin with. That will make him comfortable, and he will be in no particular hurry. Neither am I. And if I can keep him out of that shaft for a few days I'll put a spoke in his wheel, and he won't be able to give his employer any satisfaction to speak of."

"But will he not learn all about the mine when the men come up?"

"It won't satisfy him. He's an old miner himself, and nothing will do but he must see it with his own eyes."

"And will he not be suspicious when he finds he is being kept out of the shaft?"

"Not at first. I shall have a plausible reason. Shall give him work to do which will occupy him, to test his quality, as it were—which is only what he would expect—and by the time he really is suspicious I will have spoiled his game."

"What do you suppose that is?" inquired Lorimer.

Hardy hesitated for a moment. Presently he looked sharply in his companion's face, saying, "If I knew more about your relations with the man who wrote that letter I could tell better. But never mind; I don't ask you. Let me do a little divining."

He paused, and stood thoughtfully looking down upon the ground, and then suddenly changed his mind.

"After all, Mr. Lorimer, the motive of his employer is not in question, and what the man is expected to do is written plain enough in that letter. He is to report to the man who sent him the result of the investigation you are known to have been sent out here to make. That is one thing sure."

"Do you suppose there is anything else? and what good would it do—the man who sent him?"

"Oh, well, he could buy up a big block of the stock if he knew in advance it was a purchase."

"Yes, that is so. You seem to have the slang of 'the street' at your tongue's end."

Hardy laughed, and colored again. "To let you into a secret, I was once 'in the street.' In fact, I don't mind telling you it was being cleaned out there that made me come in this direction—that and the fact that the chance offered."

The pair had reached the superintendent's quarters by this time, and as it was nearing noon, they entered the house, where preparations for their dinner were apparently near completion.

The superintendent was as good as his word, and that same afternoon Ben Day was placed in charge of a small gang of men, and being carefully guided by Hardy to a particular point on a side-hill back of the shaft, was ordered to make the effort there to tunnel through and connect with the 300-foot level.

"Will they be able to reach it, do you believe?" inquired Lori-

mer, as the two climbed the hill after seeing the men fairly at work on the superficial earth.

Hardy laughed. "They might," he said, "if I should fit them out with a steam drill, but they'll hardly make their way through a thousand feet or so of granite, gneiss, and quartz with pick and shovel. However, the mere attempt has its attractions, and that will keep your man quiet for some days."

And Hardy was right. Every day the gang went to their work and stuck to it industriously until dusk, and every night Ben Day reported that he was making good progress, having found next to the surface earth some friable rock, which he was having removed, timbering as he went on. Meanwhile the labors of the main force continued daily, and with all the success that the venture had promised. The rock they were now removing was rich, and improved in quality as the gallery was extended. Both Lorimer and the superintendent spent a great deal of time in the workings,

"THERE WAS THE NOISE OF AN EXPLOSION. THE SHAFT WAS FILLED WITH SMOKE."

overseeing the men, and taking care that the labor was conducted upon the most approved system. But if Hardy had chanced to be in the immediate neighborhood of the mouth of his rudimentary tunnel on a certain night, about a week after work had been begun at that spot, he might have seen the importance of observing the progress of that particular work more closely than he did.

At an hour long after every one had apparently retired an observer would have seen a man, who was certainly wide-awake, who was evidently engaged in some quest which demanded extreme quiet and care with regard to his movements, and who would have proved to be—if he had been discovered—no other than Ben Day. He kept quite away from the mouth of the tunnel, however, bending his steps in a direction which led to a sharp natural wall of rock some distance beyond it, which seemed to shut off all communication with the other side of the hill. It did not stop the adventurous miner, however, for on reaching the extreme limit of this wall—he suddenly disappeared. He reappeared in a few moments on the farther side, and picking his steps carefully, he presently stopped beside a clump of undergrowth and began to search for something. This, when found, proved to be a dark lantern, and having lighted the lamp within it, he pushed aside the bushes and disclosed a considerable opening in the solid rock. Into this opening the miner pursued his way, seemingly with a knowledge of the route, and was now in a long passageway—a tunnel, in fact, extending deep into the mountain. Proceeding with great care for perhaps a distance of two hundred yards, a faint light could be seen shining through some crevice at the extremity of the tunnel, which was evidently not more than fifty yards away. Guiding himself by his lantern, Ben Day moved carefully along until he had reached a point where a little climbing enabled him to take an observation through the chink by which the light passed from the foot of the shaft. For it was precisely the foot of the shaft at which he had arrived, the light being left burning there all night.

It was not alone by accident that Ben Day had made this discovery. Having speedily gained a knowledge of the existence of the old workings, the shrewd fellow had suspected the possibility of such a tunnel existing, rightly divining that the ancient miners would recognize the importance of facilitating the removal of the accumulations of ore within. Having conceived the idea, his knowledge of engineering had told him that the chance for tunnelling under the least disadvantage would be greatest on the side which, he could see, formed an angle with the one where he was working, and which seemed inaccessible on account of the wall of rock which ended in a sheer precipice. Taking his opportunities when he could stroll away without being observed by the men, he had carefully examined along the line of the foot of this wall until his scrutiny had been rewarded by discovering an entrance from below—a passageway thickly crowded with underbrush, but through which he had managed to hew a path, leading him beyond the seemingly impassable wall. This passage had evidently been wrought by human hands; and still further strengthened in his original theory, he had pursued his investigations until a great heap of broken quartz had led him directly to the entrance of the ancient tunnel.

It will be observed that Ben Day had kept his secret to himself. In fact the occasion just described was the first time he had made a complete tour through the tunnel. But he had kept his secret for several reasons. One was that he knew a secret was being kept from him, though he comprehended exactly what it was; another was the impression that the superintendent had done him an ill-turn with Lorimer, and then he had other reasons, which he would not have let one hand tell the other, if that mode of communication were practicable. Now he had proved his own sagacity, and as he sat on a projecting piece of rock and peered through the aperture above, into the shaft, he chuckled to himself. "Keep me out of the shaft, Mr. Hardy, will you? I guess not." Ben did not say this aloud, but he thought it, and then he jumped down from his seat and began to inspect carefully the mass of rock that still excluded him from the immediate object of his ambition. And a very little examination brought to light what appeared to be a weak spot. Returning on his steps a short distance, Ben found a pick which he had left there conveniently, and bringing it to the extremity of the tunnel, he used it with such skill and industry that in a few moments he had excavated around one mass of stone and was able to stir it, and soon to remove it entirely, leaving a sufficiently large aperture for him to crawl through.

Arrived at the foot of the shaft, he entered the gallery and examined the exposed rock with the greatest possible care. After trying it at different points, occasionally breaking a piece and studying it thoughtfully, he returned to the entrance he had made, crawled through it, and then carefully replaced the stone which he had removed. The "mask" to the approach by the tunnel had been carefully constructed by the ancient miners, the side within the shaft having the appearance of the original rock, and the fact that the gallery at that level had been partially opened, preventing the new workers from making any attempt in that direction. Ben Day had now apparently accomplished his purpose, and he soon found his way along the tunnel to the entrance, where he hid his lantern and pick in the bushes. Then he hastened along the side of the hill to the hole under the natural wall, crept through this, and made his way in the direction of the men's quarters.

While Ben Day had been employed as we have described, Lorimer and the superintendent had been preparing a report, and a telegraphic despatch in cipher, which were to be transmitted on the following morning to Lima by a special messenger, and thence through the bank with which the mine did business to Panama, where the report was to be mailed and the despatch telegraphed to the company in New York. Hardy, as he told Lorimer, had just the proper messenger to whom they could intrust these important documents, who was familiar with every step of the way to Lima, and for whose intelligence and loyalty the superintendent would vouch. At Lorimer's request the man was called in and submitted to inspection. He was a native Limanese, who spoke English, however, perfectly; a fine-looking young fellow of twenty-five or thereabout, erect, vigorous, and intelligent. He was ordered to take the best mule he could find, and arm himself, and to be ready at sunrise, when the superintendent would deliver to him the papers he was to carry, and give him his instructions.

On leaving the superintendent's quarters the young man went directly to the stable, and waking up one of the boys, went about with him among the animals, until he had selected the one he wished, when he gave him the superintendent's order to have it ready at sunrise, and then betook himself to the general quarters to get all the sleep he could before starting on his journey. Now it chanced that as he was leaving the enclosure where the mules were picketed, Ben Day, on his way home from his expedition, passed the place, and hearing voices, paused for a moment, not desiring that his own absence should be noted. While waiting he heard the instructions given to the boy, and as soon as the Limanese had gone, he quietly strolled near the gate, when a careless question or two gave him all the information which the boy himself possessed. Five minutes later Ben was calmly reposing in his own bunk, his absence from the camp not having been observed by any one.

"HE DREW THE PACKAGE OF PAPERS FROM HIS POCKET AND SELECTED ONE."

Sunrise on the following morning found the messenger at headquarters, where the boy was already awaiting him with the mule, and who surrendered the animal without saying anything of his chance communication to Ben Day on the previous night. In a few minutes Hardy came out, and saying, "I will walk along with you a short distance, Pedro," the two passed on together, Pedro leading the mule by the bridle, while the superintendent talked earnestly to him, and he listened, occasionally nodding his head in response. When they were quite out of sight of the little building where Lorimer lay sleeping, Hardy stopped, and as the young man also paused, he drew from his pocket a package of papers and a small bag of gold. Giving all to the messenger, he said, "You fully understand, Pedro?"

"I understand perfectly."

"By-the-way, ask if they sent the despatch that you took down three weeks ago, and if they did not, tell them to let the one you have take its place. A pleasant journey to you, and remember to wait until you hear from me, no matter how long it may be. And, Pedro, keep a still tongue: if all comes out right, your fortune is made."

"You can trust me; I will not fail you."

And with a wave of his hand the Limanese cantered along the well-worn pathway toward the main road, the superintendent watching him until he was out of sight, when, turning on his heel, he walked slowly back to quarters.

About an hour later, when Pedro had got several miles distant from the camp, on the high-road through the pass to Lima, he halted, dismounted, and after tying his mule to a tree, began to search about in the road for a stone. Having found one to his mind, he drew the package of papers from his pocket, and carefully selected certain ones from among them. These he rolled up together, and producing a string, tied the stone—a long flat one—to the papers he had chosen, having restored the others to his pocket, and poising the weighted package in his right hand, was evidently about to fling it over the precipice. Suddenly a sharp crack rang out upon the still mountain air, the package fell from his grasp, the young man threw his arms up wildly, and then, as the affrighted mule broke loose and started on a run, he pitched headlong to the earth, turned over once, and lay prone upon his face, while the blood poured from a deep wound in his side. The mule continued its course along the mountain road at a pace which threatened to cast him over the precipice at the first sharp turn—which was, in fact, what happened.

The dust around the body was dyed red, as a man came running down the road with a revolver in his right hand. The man was Ben Day. Approaching the body, he turned it over, felt for the heart, and satisfied himself that the young man was quite dead. Then he took off his old Panama hat and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the back of his hand, as he gazed on the soiled and bleeding remains of him who had been only a few moments before in the full vigor of youth and vitality.

"Sorry to do it—awful sorry; but I had to."

With these words Ben Day picked up the papers from the ground, and slipped them from the weight. Then he opened the young man's coat, and took from an inner pocket the remaining papers he had received from the superintendent. Altogether there were three of these, and a letter sealed.

One was a brief message in cipher, on a single sheet, in Lorimer's handwriting. The next was also in the same writing, both being addressed to the company's office in New York, and covered many sheets; this was the report, and Ben merely glanced over it and returned it to the envelop. He looked at the superscription of the letter, which was addressed to "Miss Grace Cameron, care of Samuel Cameron, Esq., No. — Park Avenue, New York," and placed it beside the report. Then he looked at the third paper. This was in the handwriting of the superintendent, and comprised several sheets. It was addressed to Carl Brandegee, Esq., No. — Wall Street, New York. Ben read it through carefully, finding, partially torn off the bottom of the last page, another short cipher despatch to the same address. Then he refolded all the sheets, replaced them with the others in the envelop, and bestowed the package in his own pocket.

Regarding the corpse for a moment, he suddenly spurned it with his foot. "You're —— well dead, curse you!" he cried, spitefully. And seizing the body by the legs, he dragged it to the edge of the precipice, and tossed it over as though it had been a chance bowlder. Then, with a bit of brush which he stripped from the mass on the upper hill-side, he stirred the dust about that fearful spot in such manner as to speedily obliterate all the bloody traces of his deed.

When the men were called for breakfast, Ben Day slouched up to the rude table with the rest, flung his ragged Panama hat on the floor, and ate as hearty a meal as any one there.

IV.

In narrating a story of events there is nothing so deceiving as the passage of time. Either it drags, through the introduction of many incidents, or, the contrary being the case, the actual lapse is not appreciated by the reader. In the present instance it is as well to remember that the happenings which have been recounted from the time of Ralph Lorimer's arrival at the "Madre de Dios" mine actually occupied not more than a fortnight in their passage.

And this knowledge is essential also to the reader's proper understanding of Lorimer's character. For the young engineer was not in the least a man to submit himself into the hands of a subordinate with regard to any affairs, either his own or those of the authority he represented. He was, on the contrary, masterful in its most comprehensive sense; but being both judicious and modest, he never assumed the lead until he fully understood with what kind of material he was dealing.

In his present situation in an untried country, among strangers, he had simply left the reins in the hands in which he found them, until he should become sufficiently acquainted with his ground and the nature of the forces he was to handle, to take them himself. After he had given the superintendent his confidence with regard to Ben Day, by allowing him to pursue his own plans concerning him, he did not interfere, even to the extent of showing Ben that he had any doubt as to his loyalty, or evincing any coolness in his manner. It was not from anything in Lorimer's treatment of him that Ben had deduced the notion that the superintendent had tried to do him an ill-turn with the man who had befriended him. But if Lorimer had thus concealed the effect upon himself of Hardy's exposure of the letter episode, he did not in the least underestimate the importance of communicating to the company, at the earliest possible moment, the valuable intelligence he had obtained concerning their property. No matter what had happened, or was to happen, it was clear that this should be done, and it gratified him to find that Hardy was apparently quite as anxious as he was to facilitate it. As there was also offered a means for communicating with Grace, of course Lorimer took advantage of it. His letter to her, however, while hinting that his prospects were quite as promising as he had anticipated, certainly gave no clew to the real facts. Unsuspicious as Hardy had divined him to be, Lorimer was not the man to trust a secret which was not his own even to the woman he loved—at least until he was morally sure that she loved him equally. And Lorimer had not by any means that certainty.

Ben Day went about his work on the tunnel as usual; the superintendent directed the operations at the 300-foot level, as he had every day; there was nothing that the most cautious observer could have noted in the conduct of anybody connected with the "Madre de Dios" mine on the day of the murder of the mine's messenger to Lima that would have suggested either suspicion of the past or fear of the future. The usual quantity of ore was got out of the mine, and it seemed to be growing richer and richer. Ben Day, from his tunnelling work, reported excellent progress and a fair advance through soft rock. Lorimer busied himself with some assaying nearly all day, and to his entire satisfaction; the percentage of yield was something quite beyond his experience, and the quality of the metal remarkable.

And so the day wore on to sunset, when the men left the shaft, washed up, and got ready for supper. Nothing occurred at the camp worthy of remark, save that as Lorimer and Hardy were eating their evening meal the superintendent observed that he would like Lorimer to go down the shaft with him that evening.

"What for?" inquired Lorimer. It was true that he had not been down for two or three days, but the request seemed to him a curious one—to ask him to go at night.

"Well," said Hardy, "I don't exactly like the look of things there, and yet I don't want to awaken the curiosity of the men. I am afraid we are going to have a flood in there; you will be able to judge better than I; and, on the whole, I thought it best for us to go down alone, when the men were not working."

This seemed plausible enough, and Lorimer made no objection. The superintendent appeared in no hurry, however, but sat smoking and chatting after supper, and well into the evening. In fact, he recommended waiting until the men had gone to quarters, and again Lorimer made no objection. It was not until long after dark, and when the most of the men had turned in for the night, what seemed to be a hole, and then being lifted to an upright position, and pulled and hustled along a dark passageway. Behind him it seemed as though an earthquake was shattering the world in pieces, so deafening was the concussion, as crash after crash resounded through the darkness.

Presently—he could not have told if the time were long or short—he saw light. He was dragged through a mass of what seemed to be bushes; and then he stood under the silent stars, while the sweet mountain air blew full in his face, and a voice cried: "Not yet, pard. He was a cunning rascal, but by Gaul old Ben was one too many for him that time."

Ben Day it was who stood wringing Lorimer's hand, while he poured out a volley of mingled thanksgiving and curses, as Lorimer strove to gather his scattered senses enough to ask the meaning of this fearful experience.

"Why, it's just this, Mr. Lorimer. That infernal scoundrel had plotted to murder you, and I was too quick for him."

"What was that he had in his hand?"

"That was a bowie-knife—curse him! And if I'd missed my aim, you'd never 'a known what it was."

"Did you shoot him?"

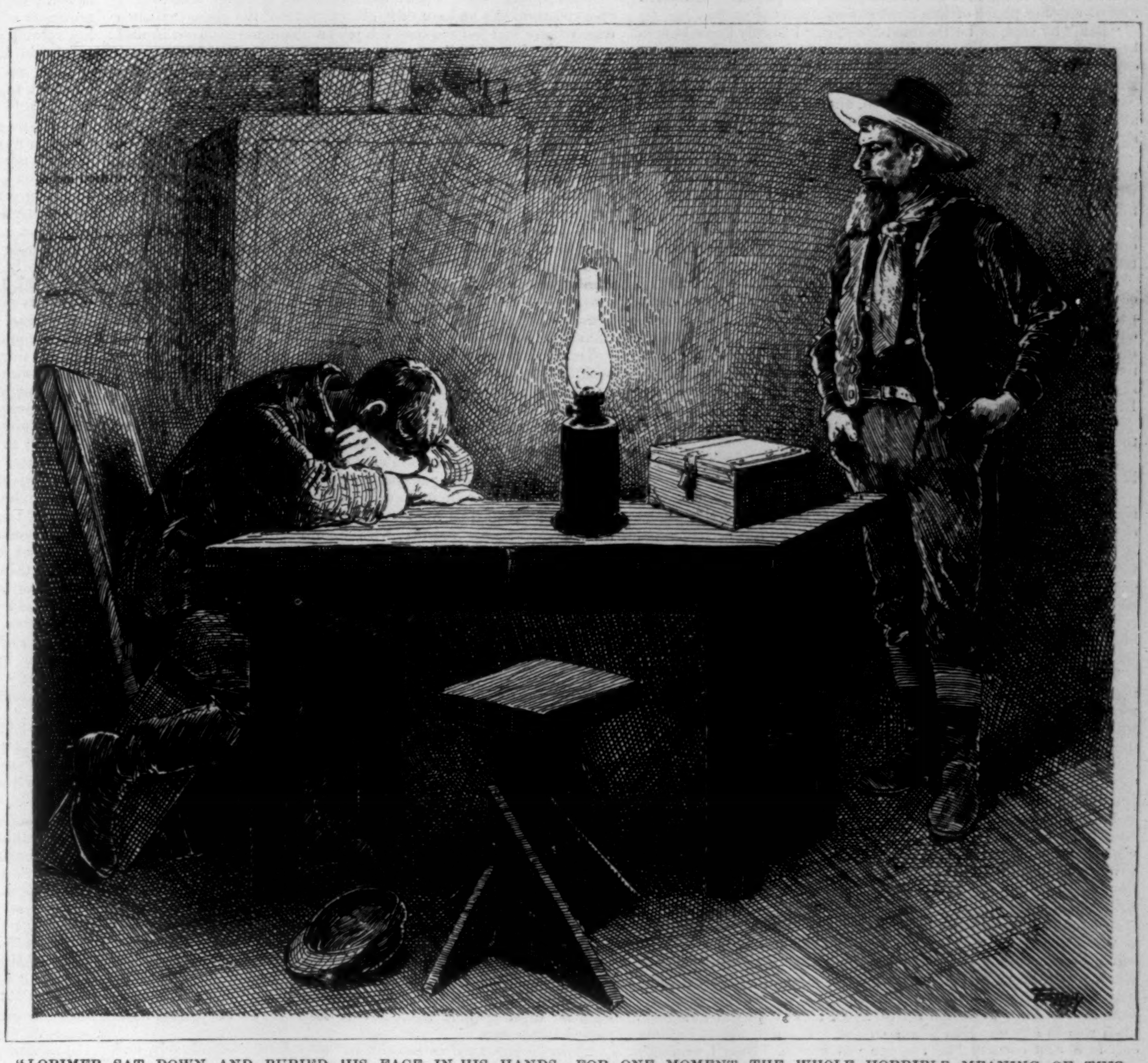
"Didn't I?—bored a hole through his lungs, you bet. But he'd never 'a wanted 'em after that shot, even if I hadn't hit him. Didn't you hear the rumpus?"

"What was it?—an earthquake?"

"No earthquake. Leastwise it was, an' I made it. How ever it happened, pard, I don't know; but that shot stirred something that brought the whole shaft down on top of him. I just got you through by the skin of your teeth. Now you want to get straight back to quarters, an' keep this to yourself. I'll tell you the whole story later, an' prove it. That durned villain meant to do the job, an' then play it off onto me; but he warn't smart enough. Only"—and here Ben Day tapped Lorimer's chest impressively with his forefinger—"yer don't know nothin' about it: you're abed in yer bunk. Yer haven't seen Hardy; an' then the whole thing's an accident. See?"

In the whirl of his emotions Lorimer could gather that this was in fact the wisest course to pursue, and he followed Ben Day as the latter piloted him past the wall of rock, and so to his quarters. He was quietly in bed, when a noise at the door caused him to rise again. One of the men was pounding at the door, and in answer to Lorimer's, "Who's there?" a voice replied, "Something has happened to the mine, Mr. Lorimer—an explosion or a cave-in, and we can't find Mr. Hardy."

Saying he would go at once, Lorimer clothed himself as quickly as possible, and in a few moments joined the man, and the two



"LORIMER SAT DOWN AND BURIED HIS FACE IN HIS HANDS. FOR ONE MOMENT THE WHOLE HORRIBLE MEANING OF THIS CATASTROPHE FLASHED UPON HIM."

that the two proceeded to the mouth of the shaft. It was easy enough for them to lower themselves, the arrangement for sending down the bucket being automatic, and regulated as readily by the person descending as at the surface. They were provided with lanterns, but found the usual light burning at the foot of the shaft.

Lorimer observed, as by a flash of intelligence, that as Hardy stepped from the bucket his hand trembled, and he looked paler than usual. He was about to remark upon this, when the superintendent directed his attention to water trickling through the side of the rock, and he stooped to examine it. While thus bending he became instinctively conscious of a sudden movement on the part of the superintendent, and turning suddenly, saw him standing above him, with his hand uplifted, in which something glittered—something bright and sharp; and then there was the noise of an explosion—the shaft was filled with smoke; he heard the sound of a rushing and roaring that grew louder; and after that he became dazed, and knew nothing accurately. Some one had grasped him by the arms, and he felt himself dragged along the ground, through hastened to the spot where had been the mouth of the shaft. Here was now a yawning pit, apparently some ten or fifteen feet deep, at the bottom of which could be dimly seen a confused mass of rock and dirt—the result of the caving in of the sides of the shaft and the sinking of the surface.

"How did this happen?" inquired Lorimer, to whose manner the terrible nature of his recent experience had given a tinge of excitement, which seemed quite natural under the present circumstances. One of the foremen stood near him, and replied:

"We can't imagine, sir. We heard an awful roar and crash, and when we got here this is the way we found it."

"Where is Mr. Hardy?"

"He can't be found, sir.—If you please, Mr. Lorimer," the man continued, drawing him aside, "we think he's down there;" and he pointed.

"Good God!" cried Lorimer. "Why do you think so?"

"Because the bucket was down."

"But the bucket might have been carried down by the crash."

"No, sir, not that way, if you please: nearly all the rope was

out. If it had been carried down from the top—and I don't see how that could have happened—the rope would have broken."

"And if you please, sir," said another of the men, "I heard Mr. Hardy say to-day that he would go down to-night and have a look at the shaft, after the work was stopped."

"But did he mean to go alone?" inquired Lorimer; and he waited anxiously to learn if the superintendent had mentioned him.

"He didn't say anything about having any one go with him, sir."

Lorimer reflected for a few moments; then he addressed the men: "I am afraid it is true that Mr. Hardy has perished in the mine. It is very terrible. The whole disaster is frightful, and it is impossible to tell how it happened. So far as I can see now, it must put a stop to our operations. I will think it over, and decide to-morrow, but my impression is that I shall have to return to New York before anything can be done in the way of reopening the mine, even if the company decide to do it, which will be very doubtful. But I will see you to-morrow, and we will come to the best arrangement we can. Good-night, all of you!" and Lorimer lifted his hat, and walked slowly back to his quarters, while the men gathered in groups and talked over this frightful calamity which had so unexpectedly destroyed the prospects of all of them.

As to any attempt to recover the body of the lost superintendent, it was so plain that this was an impossibility that no one had even thought of suggesting it. It was recognized that he was lying crushed to death at the bottom of the shaft, with many hundred tons of rock piled on top of him.

When Lorimer reached his room he found Ben Day outside, awaiting him, with a box in his hand, which, as they entered, he laid upon the table. Having done this, he closed the big shutter of each window while Lorimer lighted a lamp.

"I thought I'd better go to his office and get out his papers, sir," said Ben. "I miss my mark if yer don't find the whole mystery explained here."

Lorimer sat down and buried his face in his hands. For one moment the whole horrible meaning of this catastrophe flashed upon him. His life saved, as if by a miracle, only to encounter the utter wreck of all his hopes. The company which had employed him ruined, for he could not imagine they would undertake to reopen the mine at such a tremendous expenditure of time and money. And most of all his possible chance, his only one, of gaining the hand of Grace Cameron, blighted forever. The outlook was so formidable as to be almost prostrating. Lorimer was a very abstemious man, but he rose, went to a cupboard, and pouring out a glass of brandy from the stores kept there, drank it down at a gulp. Then turning, he saw Ben Day regarding him curiously, and the sight of him, for he had forgotten his presence, reminded him of another phase of this most extraordinary situation.

"Ben," he said, as he resumed his seat, "I hardly know how to begin, there is so much to learn, and so much that only you can explain. But take a glass of brandy—excuse my thoughtlessness. I must not forget that I owe my life to you."

"Thank you kindly, sir," said Ben, and he helped himself liberally; and then, at Lorimer's invitation, seated himself at the opposite side of the table.

"Now, sir, if you'll excuse my suggestion, you may save yourself a lot of questions if you just open that box. I haven't an idee what there is in it, but Mr. Hardy kept it mighty private, and it may give a clew to the hull business."

"You're right, Ben, I guess," said Lorimer, and he proceeded to open the box, which was made of wood, bound with iron, and fastened with a strong padlock.

It required the use of tools and considerable time before the lid could be forced. When it was, the box was found to be full of papers, neatly folded and endorsed. A large strong envelop attracted Lorimer's attention, and he examined that. To his astonishment, the first paper that met his eye was the original of the mysterious letter which Hardy had assured him was in Ben Day's possession. Lorimer gave an ejaculation of surprise. Meanwhile Ben looked on unconcernedly.

"Do you know that paper, Ben?" inquired Lorimer, handing it to him.

Ben took it, turned it over, examined it closely. "Never saw it in my life before, sir."

It was perfectly clear to Lorimer that he never had, and a deep sigh of relief attested to his satisfaction at the discovery, while he extended his hand to the sturdy friend, whom he felt he had deeply injured by doubting, even on testimony which seemed to tell so strongly against him. Ben took the proffered hand and shook it energetically, while his looks showed the surprise he felt at Lorimer's unwonted expression of feeling.

"Never mind," said the latter, in response to his look. "I'll explain it all to you hereafter"; and he went on with his examination of the papers.

There were the rough notes for full reports on the mine, with the estimated yield of every foot and every ton of ore. Then there were calculations of the possible dividends on the capital stock, with estimates of expenses carefully demonstrated. Lorimer thought this was curious figuring for the man who was simply in charge of the practical details of the working, but he set it down to Hardy's Wall Street education. Then his eye lighted on a package endorsed "Letters from C. B.," and he hurriedly opened this and scanned its contents. Now he knew that his enemy had indeed been Carl Brandegee. The letters dated back to the time when Hardy was put in charge of the mine, and showed that the writer was in possession of the minutest information regarding it. One of these, written at the time of Lorimer's first connection with the company, announced the fact of his appointment, but stated that his name had not yet been made known. It concluded in these words: "I will tell you who he is as soon as I know myself. Remember he is not to be permitted to interfere with our plans, which he certainly will do if he is allowed to remain there long enough to communicate with New York. Before that happens he will have to be got rid of, and I leave it to you to accomplish this in any way that seems easiest. It ought not to be difficult in a wild country like the one you are in. Only I wouldn't depute the job to anybody. *One more* will make no difference to you, and certainly not increase your own danger from me. And I don't suppose you *forget* what I remember."

Lorimer thought a moment after reading this; then he handed it silently to Ben Day. The latter read it through, and then examined the fragment which lay on the table before him.

"He sent your name, as he said he would; and this man Hardy must have been an old hand," said he.

Lorimer nodded. He had laid aside the letters, and was now carefully studying a pencilled memorandum, dated three weeks before, marked "Copy; instructions to Pedro." It showed that Pedro had been sent to Lima with a cipher despatch which was to have been transmitted to Panama, and so by wire to Carl Brandegee. What this cipher despatch contained was not stated.

While Lorimer had been reading this, Ben had been comparing Brandegee's letter with the mysterious fragment. Presently he looked up and said, "This is not the same writing, Mr. Lorimer." Lorimer took the two papers and examined them. Then he compared the fragment with the pencilled memorandum; they were identical.

"By heavens!" he cried, "that accounts for it. It was a cipher despatch telegraphed to Panama, and sent down by mail, and that fellow Pedro must have got it just before my arrival, and brought it up to Hardy. This is a copy. Now if we could only find the original!" And he began to turn over the papers remaining in the box.

"Right you are, pard," said Ben Day, striking the table a hard blow with his open hand. "Excuse the liberty, but it was sticking in my crop how he ever got that letter, unless it came in the same steamer as you did, and we brought up no mail from Lima."

"I have it," cried Lorimer, excitedly, and he brought forth the contents of another envelop, which was endorsed, "Cipher telegrams from C. B.," and with which was a key to the cipher employed. A few moments' study found the despatch and translated it.

"Well, I am glad I understand that," said Lorimer. "It is of no particular importance, but it worried me. And here are copies of his own despatches. Now we shall know something."

There were only half a dozen in all, which had afterward been put in cipher for transmission. The first four were unimportant, giving good accounts of the mine, but nothing decisive. The fifth—plainly the one which Pedro had sent off just prior to Lorimer's arrival—was in these words:

"Have struck ancient workings sealed up. Also found an old tunnel; got through, and prospected. Ore unlimited, and value incredible. You may go the full length of all you can raise. I pledge my life on it."

"Hell!" shouted Ben Day; "then he knew the tunnel, after all."

"Here is a despatch he must have sent by his man this very morning without telling me," said Lorimer, and he read the following:

"The man is here, knows all, but won't know anything after to-night. Hope you acted on my last; that is, buy all you can possibly get at any price. Shall follow this, as soon as the act blows over. If necessary, can lay it to a fellow he brought up with him."

"Well, by Gaul! That was cool; but he never 'll see that despatch anyhow," said Ben Day.

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? just this;" and he drew from his pocket the papers he had taken from the dead Limanese, and threw them down before Lorimer, who picked them up, and stared with astonishment.

"Why, these are the papers we forwarded this morning!"

"You're right, they are; though your share of 'em never was meant to reach: and the fellow that took them won't never tell what happened to 'im."

"Ben—you don't mean—"

Ben drew his revolver and pointed to two empty chambers.

"She spoke twice, pard; and by Gaul, if she'd missed ary one, you wouldn't be here now. It was readin' the cussed villain's report there that put me onto the job an' made me go down in that there tunnel to-night." And so saying, he pointed to the bottom of one of the sheets in Hardy's writing, where were these words: "I shall take the next steamer, leaving things here in charge of Pedro, who is to meet me in Lima, and then return. You know him well enough to know everything will be safe with him." "You see, pard—excuse the liberty I'm takin'—when I read that, I says, by Gaul he's goin' to make way with Mr. Lorimer. I nosed round all day, and watched him, and I hearn you an' him to-night discussin' about goin' down in the shaft. Then I dropped on his game.

"I just got myself down in that there tunnel the quickest I ever moved, an' was there a-watchin' in the dark when you two kim down in the bucket. I drawed a bead onto him then, an' by Gaul it never left him again—till it steered a forty-eight calibre hole into his infernal carcass." And Ben sat down and wiped his forehead with the back of his hand, as he had done over the body of the dead Limanese in the morning.

To say that this amazing revelation of another of the chapter of accidents to which he owed his life astounded Lorimer beyond measure is to put it mildly.

"Ben," he said, with emotion, "my friendship is a poor thing to what it might have been, but such as it is, you shall never want for it;" and the two men shook hands again, managing, after the fashion of men, to conceal a good deal of feeling by that simple act.

"But, Ben, why did you shoot the messenger? Would it not have done just as well to have come back and reported what you had seen? And then the discarded papers would have convicted him."

Ben looked even contemptuous for a moment.

"No mortal man could ever have found them papers. And who would have taken my word for it? Why, Mr. Lorimer, they were your papers he was throwing away, and all the fellow need have done would have been to swear I took them from him, or that the hull thing was a lie. He would have been backed by Hardy—and you yourself was beginnin' to distrust me."

There was no doubt that Ben was right, and unfortunate and sad as the act was, Lorimer could not but own that it was justified by appearances at the time, while now, in the face of what he knew, he felt that it was necessary.

"It 'll never be known, Mr. Lorimer," added Ben. "The condors and vultures 'll peel the bones of that Peruvian inside of twenty-four hours; and as for the other, he'll never tell. I wish I had never done nothin' worse than cornerin' them two hounds," he added, after a moment, as though in response to some disagreeable memory, which Lorimer did not care to probe.

But the last surprise was to come, and it was found at the bottom of the superintendent's box, in the shape of a carefully drawn plan of the mine, with the ancient tunnel set down in its proper relation to the shaft, and the last hundred feet of the latter indicated, precisely as Lorimer and Hardy had found it, though the plan had evidently been drawn long prior to its exploration. Ben, on their way from the mine, had told Lorimer how he had discovered the existence of the tunnel.

"It is a pity that a man with so much ability should have been such an unscrupulous villain," said Lorimer, as he restored the papers to the box.

"Them's the kind as usually is," said Ben, sententiously, and dropping into that peculiar construction of the English language which always characterized his utterance when under excitement.

Hours had passed since they entered the cabin, and it was now near dawn. Bestowing the box in his own trunk, Lorimer confessed his need for rest, and with another warm grasp of the hand the two men separated, and Ben slouched over to his own quarters and turned in.

On the following day Lorimer paid off the men, and arranged for them to do what was necessary toward dismantling the camp; having done which, they were to take the mules and go down to Lima, report to the clerk at the bank who acted as the company's agent, and disband. Taking three of the mules for himself and Ben Day and their luggage, including all of the company's papers—Ben's sack being all there was of his property—Lorimer bade farewell to the men, and took the road for Lima. On his arrival there he found a steamer was just leaving for Panama, and taking Ben Day's advice not to mention in Lima the disaster to the mine, the two went on board, and steamed off for Panama. Ben very sagaciously observed: "We'll get a week's start of the news that way, anyhow, and if that don't do any good, it certainly won't do any harm," with which sentiment Lorimer very willingly agreed, though he could not possibly see how it could be of any use.

V.

Arrived at Panama, the travellers found they could make better time by returning *via* San Francisco, and accordingly chose that route. From San Francisco Lorimer sent a despatch to New York in the company's cipher, announcing the collapse of the mine, and stating that further work upon it would be impossible without enormous outlay. He also desired that any letters or despatches for him should be forwarded to meet him at Chicago. At that city he laid over one train, obtained his mail, but had not examined it, and his train was within a few moments of the time for leaving Chicago, when a stout, well-preserved old gentleman, accompanied by a tall, handsome girl, entered the car in which the two men were occupying seats.

"Sit here, my dear," said the old gentleman; "I will be back in a moment." A sweet voice said, "Excuse me," and then, as Lorimer rose, white and completely unnerved by this unexpected meeting, Grace Cameron cried, eagerly, "Why, Ralph!" and the next moment the two stood with their hands clasped, utterly ignoring the presence of the other passengers, while their eyes told whatever the pressure of their hands left unsaid, which was very little.

Ben Day slipped out, somehow, unseen; and Ralph found himself seated by the side of Grace, utterly bewildered, but intensely happy. For there was no mistaking the sentiment that now lit up the young girl's face until it was radiant; and Lorimer knew that, no matter what might have been in the past, the love of Grace Cameron in the present was a certainty that no doubt or misunderstanding could possibly overcome. A very few moments served to tell how this happy meeting had chanced to be brought about. She had left the East a fortnight after he had bidden her farewell—how long ago it seemed!—for a trip with her father to the Yellowstone Valley, and they were now on their return home.

"And Brandegee?" queried Lorimer.

"I never spoke to him after the day you left. Ralph, I don't deserve your forgiveness quite, for I was not true to you or to myself for a little while. But though I do not excuse myself, I was in a measure driven to it. You know you went away, and he returned; and then every possible means of persuasion and suggestion were used by everybody. I had known him so long, and you such a little while. I distrusted my own heart, and I was not sure of yours. And— Oh, Ralph, will you forgive me, and take me back?"

It was a miracle that there was not a scene then and there not customary to railroad travel. But Ralph, by a superhuman effort, refrained from taking her right in his arms, letting a surreptitious squeeze on account indicate what she might expect when an opportunity offered. And then Grace covered the situation by talking volubly of whatever came uppermost in her mind.

"I told father, after a very few words I had with *him* as I was walking up from the landing. I did not feel very kind toward him just then, Ralph, and I did feel awfully ashamed of myself. Well, I told father that nothing in the world would induce me ever again to so much as speak to him. And I told him—yes, I did—that you were the only one I ever could care anything about. And I didn't mind if you were poor or not, or if we both were, I would marry you—if you would have me. Do you think you will be able to put up with such a wilful, wicked girl, Ralph?"

Lorimer's face was a sufficient response to this question, yet he could not conceal from its expression altogether an indication of the trouble which perplexed him. The quick perception of the girl rightly interpreted this, and she said, reassuringly: "I mean just what I say, dear, but I guess we shall not be so badly off. Father is quite reconciled to the situation, and as his will is law—after mine, of course—mother only had to give up, as graciously as she could, her pet project. And here is father—and the train just starting. Papa, aren't you surprised? Here is Mr. Lorimer."

The two men greeted each other very cordially, and if Mr. Cameron experienced any annoyance, either at the unexpected meeting, or over the thoughts of which it naturally reminded him, he successfully concealed it.

"Glad to see you, my boy—glad to see you! Hope you have done better in your mining venture than I see by the papers young Brandegee did in his."

"Brandegee!" exclaimed Lorimer, glad of any subject to which he could turn the conversation from himself—"why, I thought he never touched mining stocks."

"Never did before. But he went crazy over some new stock; I can't think of the name of it; bulled the market till he even drove the officers of the company into selling their shares, and I guess held all there was in existence. Then all at once there came news that the mine had caved in—what the mischief was the name of that stock?—and then it turned out that he had paid for it by hypothecating collaterals which had been given to him as security for call loans. Grace, what the deuce was the name of that confounded mine; it was Spanish; some kind of swearing—"

"Oh, I know, father; it was 'Madre de Dios.'"

Lorimer's head reeled. Rising from his seat, he said: "Excuse me for a moment; this interests me. If you will allow me I will just look at my despatches."

Without waiting for a reply, he hurried back into the smoking compartment, where he found Ben Day calmly enjoying his pipe, and revelling in his first experience in a drawing-room car. Seating himself, Lorimer opened hurriedly the thick letter from the company's office, and glanced through it. He hardly knew what words he was reading, but somehow the sense dawned upon him.

All that Mr. Cameron had said was correct. The "Madre de Dios" had been "boomed" as never before was stock boomed in the New York Mining Exchange. A new element had suddenly flung itself into the daily *mêlée* of bulls and bears, and had sought right and left for "Madre de Dios." The price had gone up—up—up. Old hands long out of speculation heard of it in their dusty, frowzy little offices in Pine Street and William Street, and remembering the wild days of Best & Belcher, Yellow Jacket and Consolidated Virginia, hurried into the Exchange to witness the mad whirl of excitement over this almost unheard-of stock.

Up—up—up went the price. From all directions crowds of excited operators flooded the room and foamed over into the street. Then the rumor went about with lightning speed that one of the biggest and boldest operators in "the street" had deserted railroads to put his millions into "Madre de Dios." Absent holders of the stock in all parts of the country were wired to sell, as the price was fabulous. Sell? On one hand was the fact that not a member of the Mining Exchange knew enough about the "Madre de Dios" mine to furnish a five-line paragraph for the evening papers, whose reporters were swarming on the scene, ready to weep because they could obtain no facts. On the other hand was the generally accepted rumor that a man whose invariable success in the most daring combinations was the talk of Wall Street had suddenly left Wall Street, and was forcing this hitherto unheard-of mining stock—capitalized in ten millions of dollars—*up to par*.

Sell? Already enough of it had been bought—all the way up from twenty-five cents to nearly the ten dollars per share which represented its par value—to make a close call for a sum equal to three-quarters of the capital stock to pay for it. Up—up—up.

The officers of the company, never profoundly impressed with the value of their property, continually misled by their superintendent as to its value, having heard no word from Lorimer, and

without the faintest idea of who was buying, or if the whole exciting situation were not a gigantic practical joke, being heavily in debt, and seeing that if this demand were *bona fide* they could realize more than twenty times all they had ever put into it—the company warily, and just with sufficient rapidity to tempt the purchasing brokers, began to throw their stock on the market. But there was no hesitation in buying.

Up—up—up went the stock, and when at last the well-known cry rang out, "Any part of fifty thousand shares of 'Madre de Dios' at eight dollars, eight fifty, nine dollars, *ten dollars*," and there were no takers, the Exchange collapsed, and a mad, dancing, yelling crowd stampeded into the street, and surged into groups, and wondered which lunatic asylum was yawning for this particular victim.

"Nothing like it was ever known, my boy," wrote the president of the company in closing his long and graphic description of the scene, "and the best of it—for you—remains to be told. Your tenth share amounts to a little less than half a million of dollars, and is on deposit, awaiting your order.

"We learned of the collapse of the mine and the death of Mr. Hardy a week before your despatch reached us. It was telegraphed to all the papers from Panama, and Brandegee, on hearing it, left the city, and has not been heard of since. It turns out that the stock of the 'Madre de Dios' had been mainly bought with his own money, only about fifty thousand dollars being the result of his rehypothecation. But he was ruined, a complete smash, and now everybody is wondering what ever induced him to wreck his splendid fortune and prospects in such an insane venture. He may have had, or thought he had, intelligence that certainly was not in our possession, but we can tell nothing about it until we see you: it may be that you can enlighten us."

Lorimer closed the letter and folded it. Then he drew a long breath.

"Ben, you remember I told you my friendship wasn't worth much?"

Ben nodded, but with a manner which signified that he had his own opinion about that.

"Well, it is worth more than I thought. I owe to you—through blood and disaster—the miracle of strange blessings that has been wrought in my behalf. Part of it means wealth beyond my dreams. And as long as I live you shall never want for a dollar or a friend."

"Put it there, pard," said Ben, in a husky voice. "You stood by me when I was broke, an' now, if yer've raked in your pile—why, I'm glad. An' if yer've straightened matters with yer gyurl, why, I'm glad of that too. But I ain't goin' to be no stumblin'-block onto you. Just you help me to a sit an' an outfit, an' we's quits."

The journey to New York was a period of joy for Lorimer that no other delight could probably ever quite equal. He said as little as possible about his affairs, stating, in answer to Mr. Cameron's guarded questions, that he could not quite tell how he stood until he had seen his employers. As for Grace, she was so full of happiness in her new-old love that she cared nothing for the merely practical affairs of life, and evinced no curiosity whatever.

On their arrival in New York, Lorimer bade a temporary farewell to his fellow-travellers, leaving a tacit understanding that henceforth he would occupy the position of accepted suitor to Grace—vice Carl Brandegee, disbanded. Proceeding at once to the company's office with Ben Day, he found no one there but a remarkably keen boy, whom he recognized as having seen there before his departure from the city, six weeks before. Six weeks? Could it be possible that, even in a dream, a man could go through such experiences as had been his in that brief time?

In answer to his inquiries the youth in charge said he didn't know where anybody belonging to the company could be found, except it was the president.

"He comes fidgeting round every day, wantin' to know if you hain't come. He was here this mornin,' an' said if you came I was to tell you to go to his house right away. I say, Mr. Lorimer," he shouted, as the latter was leaving, "they've all got rich sinst you went away."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. They've got b'ilin's of money. 'Maddry de Dyus' went up to par, an' they had a corner onto it, an' so they's all millionaires. They ain't no company no more. They's just a-keepin' me here to stay till the rent's used up. Know a good place for a sharp boy?"

Lorimer promised to remember him if he heard of one, and then, after making an appointment with Ben for the evening, he went straight to the president's house—an old friend of his father's—where that functionary met him with effusion. In another hour Lorimer was placed in possession of his fortune, and after giving up the company's papers, and relating the surprising discovery of the old workings in the mine, he asked the president if he thought the company would contemplate reopening it. So far from this were the president's views that he declared his intention—with Lorimer's assistance—of keeping the whole matter a secret. Whatever had become of the stock he did not know; probably it had been turned over to Brandegee's creditors with the other assets. Certainly the trouble of reconciling all the conflicting interests, and reorganizing, besides beginning with the very disagreeable feature of digging out the superintendent's remains, were not likely to encourage anybody to go into it. Both therefore agreed to keep the matter secret, and to this understanding they held ever after. Excepting Grace. And even she rested in ignorance of those wonderful and terrible occurrences amid the Cordilleras, until, a few months later, she had become Mrs. Ralph Lorimer. It was during the honey-moon that Lorimer narrated to her the entire history, interrupted, naturally, by many a burst of weeping, many a swift embrace, as the full intensity of that period of horror and of danger was made clear to her.

Ben Day she looked upon as a demi-god in the rough. She made his acquaintance, and of course he almost worshipped her; and she was never satisfied until Ralph had set him up on a ranch, where he found a life that agreed with him, and more fun than he had ever enjoyed before in teaching that "sharp" company's office youth how to be a cow-boy.

And yet the story is not quite all told. A year later a traveller through the Cordilleras came upon a dismantled mining camp. Pausing and dismounting, he looked about him curiously, when his eye was attracted by something in motion just outside the camp. He went to the spot, and discovered, to his surprise, that the moving object was a man, who was seemingly working alone in this solitude. He was gaunt and thin, with long gray hair, and piercing, dangerous eyes looked out from beneath his overhanging and bony brows, and a long matted gray beard concealed the lower part of his emaciated face. He never so much as looked up from his work as the traveller approached, nor replied as he addressed him.

At the mouth of an old shaft he had rigged a rude bucket by a rope on a windlass. Ladders extended down one side of the shaft, and by these means he toiled ever to raise from below such fragments as he could move of rock which had evidently been cast down there by some natural convulsion, or by a collapse in the shaft itself. With back bent to his work, and with the strain of an intense purpose visible in every movement of his set muscles, this man, young in years, but aged in appearance and in his actual life by a single withering blast of fate, climbed laboriously down and up the ladders, toiled with the masses of stone with a fretful impatience that there were so many and that they were so heavy, yet with no such idea as a cessation of his intent ever finding a place in the frenzied brain which now held but one purpose.

To lift, stone by stone, this burden and weight, this was his task. Had all of the rock within that shaft been made up of fragments such as those which with scarred and bleeding hands he had succeeded in bringing to the surface, and piling in small heaps about the mouth of the shaft, through days and weeks and months of solitary and helpless labor, it would even then have been a superhuman task for one man to attempt; as it was, it was an impossible one. But had he at last met with success, and penetrating thus into the bowels of the earth, had he been permitted to remove from the awful presence beneath the weight of the superincumbent mass, the man who planned the murder of Ralph Lorimer and the man who lost his own life in his vain attempt to execute the foul deed would have met at the 300-foot level of the "Madre de Dios" mine.

"THE MOVING OBJECT WAS A MAN WHO WAS SEEMINGLY WORKING ALONE IN THIS SOLITUDE."

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT.

THEY say the longest day's in June,
The shortest in December;
And yet I cannot think 'tis true,
Because, don't you remember

How very short those days in June
When we two were together,
And how the longest days of all
Were in the winter weather?

Whate'er the almanac may say,
No matter what the weather,
The days seem long when we're apart,
And shortest when together.

A. J. C.

HOW I BOUGHT THAT CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

I.

THE greater part of the following narrative will be recognized as historical. That part of it which is not found in history is clearly shown to be true by the attendant circumstances.

On July 2, 1776, three English men-of-war and a division of transports passed through the Narrows, at the entrance to New York Bay, and anchored off Staten Island. The grenadiers and light-infantry put off in row-boats, while the Long Island shore reverberated with the alarm-guns of the Americans. Among the small boats was one which bore General Howe, commander-in-chief of the British forces, and standing on the gunwale of the boat, anxiously watching the near approach to land, was the general's favorite dog, a Scotch collie by the name of Frolic. As the boat grated on the sands the dog leaped ashore with a joyous bark, and capered about in great glee. The troops being landed, the general betook himself to Richmond, where he made his headquarters. As the night approached, General Howe thought of his dog for the first time, and called him. No one remembered seeing the favorite collie since the landing of the troops, and it was evident after a time that he was lost. The general at once sat down and indited the following notice:

FIVE POUNDS REWARD.—Lost, a collie dog, answering to ye name of Frolic. The above reward will be given to any one returning ye dog to ye Headquarters of ye Commander-in-Chief of his Majestie's Army.

WM. HOWE.

The notice was laid aside to be posted the next day, but for some unknown reason was neglected, and lay undisturbed among the private papers of the British general.

II.

It was in the early part of December, 1886, that I lay back in my easy-chair and thought over my condition. It was anything but promising, and my reflections were of the most pessimistic kind. In the first place, a Christmas gift had to be purchased for a certain person, and I had not the money with which to get it. I had not decided just what kind of a present to make, but it would have to be a nice one; for although I was not engaged then to this somebody, I expected to be. I could not buy anything on credit, for those who did not know me would most certainly refuse to trust me, and those who *did* know me were of the same mind. I pictured to myself how the sweet black eyes of somebody would sparkle if the present were forth-coming at the proper moment, and then I saw the look of regret that she would wear should I call on Christmas Eve without any little token to show my deep love and affection. Girls always like substantial proofs of such things; the more substantial, the better. Something had to be done, and so I thought, considered, ruminated, and reflected, but with no better success than deciding that I must get that present; how to get it, I gave up.

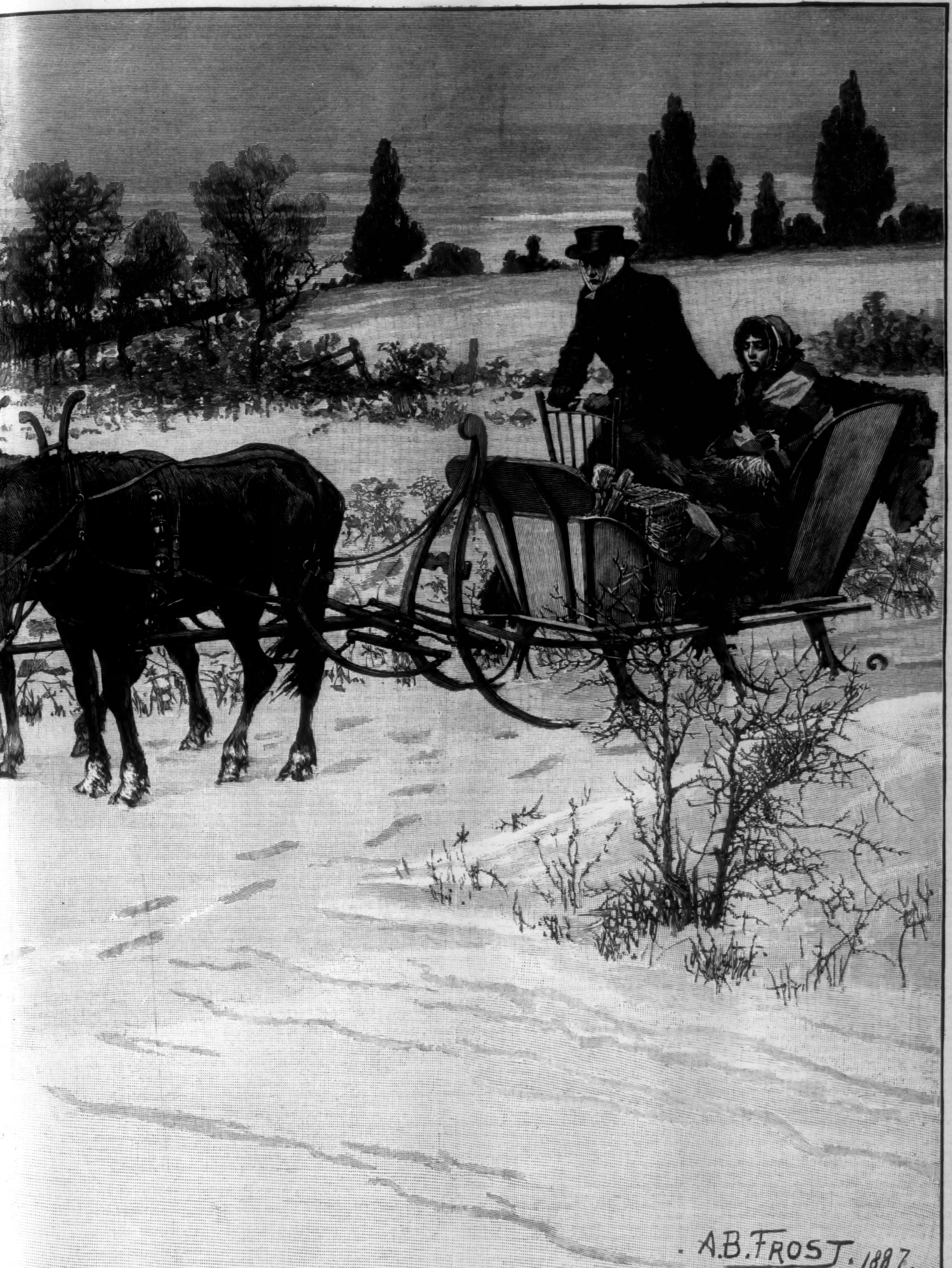
In "a spirit of desperation, born of despair," I looked through my pockets, and turned them inside out in the hope of finding a stray bank-note, but none appeared. Fate led me to further ransack all my chests and papers, and while examining some old documents that had passed into my possession I came across a notice, signed by Lord Howe, of the British army, offering five pounds reward for the return of a dog. It was an odd-looking old thing, with the general's seal in great red wax on it, and I gazed at it curiously. As I read, the bark of a dog was heard in the yard. "Frolic," I repeated, re-reading the notice, and then suddenly the truth flashed across my mind. This dog whose bark had sounded from below *was the descendant of the dog for whom the reward was offered.* I thought over the matter, and was sure of it. My grandfather, then but a boy, had witnessed the landing of the British troops. Deeming it no sin, as the son of a stanch patriot, to confiscate the property of the enemy, he had allowed the dog to follow him home. That it was the dog of the English general there was no doubt, and when his father was obliged, on account of offensive partisanship, to remove to New Jersey, the dog went along. My grandfather liked the name of Frolic, and retained it for the dog's descendants. The direct line of descent was clearly proven by the genealogical table that had been carefully kept, and the pedigree of my dog was without question. Could I not recover the reward? I considered the matter, and decided that if I should return the dog that I owned to the heirs of Lord Howe, I could claim the reward with compound interest. At, say, five per cent., it would amount to a great sum—some thousands of pounds. I felt sure that the claim would be disputed, but I was equally certain that the money belonged to me, for had I not the papers offering the reward, in Lord Howe's own handwriting, and a descendant of the original dog as well?

To shorten my story, I sat down at once and wrote to my lawyer, stating the facts and enclosing the paper I had found. A few days dragged slowly by, while I decided over and over again how I would spend my fortune when I got it. A great part of it, I made up my mind, would go for the present. At last the reply came, and enclosed with the letter was a check. I had told my lawyer to compromise if necessary, and I thought that he had consulted with some legal brother, and had sent me a part of the money to show that he believed my case a sure one, or else he had arranged matters by cable. At any rate I did not examine the check at once, but laid it aside to read the letter. As I read, my face fell. My case, wrote the lawyer, was a very ingenious one, but he would not care to undertake it. He had, however, shown the old notice to some antiquarian friend, and had disposed of it to him, for the sake of the general's autograph, for *five dollars.* Further, said the lawyer, Lord Howe had left no heirs. Hoping that I would be satisfied with the check which he encloses, he remained, as ever, mine to command.

Five dollars! So my dreams of thousands had come to this; but as I looked at the check I felt really glad that I had received something, for that something would purchase the needed present. And it did. Besides, I had the dog left.

FLAVEL SCOTT MINES.

"LOST THEIR WAY."—Drawn by



Y A. B. Frost.—[See Page 918.]

THE CHEERFUL HORN.

THE gentleman who is blowing a horn in the picture on page 925 of our Supplement is an artist in his way, and is one of the most important and popular personages connected with a logging camp. He is important and popular because he is the camp's cook, and he is an artist because he is capable of setting before the loggers just the sort of meal that loggers want. This may not be, perhaps, a wholly proper test of art, but it is the test to which the art of cooks is commonly submitted. This scene is laid among the pine forests of northern Michigan. The long tin horn is extending an invitation which will be answered with extreme promptness by the entire camp. It is hardly necessary to explain that the horn means dinner. Presently there will come tramping a company of large, loose-jointed men, not one of whom will be ailing. They will be clad in ordinary-fitting but startlingly brilliant coats and trousers made out of Mackinaw blankets, scarlet and blue, with horizontal stripings of black. But inside the log-house they will find it warm, and they will sit at dinner in their shirt sleeves.

Loggers insist upon good fare and good accommodation, and it is the habit of proprietors to afford these. Those who have visited logging camps in northern Michigan will bear witness to the solidity and excellence of the entertainment. Sportsmen from the cities, who are not averse to the association of luxury with life in the woods, are always well pleased to get among the lumbermen. If we could look inside the log-house we should find coffee steaming in enormous tin pots, venison cooked in fine style by the man who is blowing the horn, and canned food of all sorts. Above everything the lumberman wants a sufficiency of powerful coffee. Like all men who are exposed to great cold and cutting winds he finds this a particularly cheering and refreshing beverage. The life-savers on the north Atlantic coast, who patrol miles of beach on stormy winter nights, have the same eager appetite, and in their stations a pot of hot coffee is always waiting. One might think that so much coffee would be calculated to upset the nerves. Perhaps it is; but somehow the life-savers and the lumbermen seem to drink it with impunity. Certainly nervous disorders are not common among them.

It would not do to say positively where the man with the tin horn learned his art of cooking. He is not a French cook, as that term is ordinarily understood, although he is sometimes a French Canadian who has strayed across the border. Perhaps most commonly he has served his apprenticeship on some of the Western lake or river steam-boats, or it may be that he has always been in the woods, which would be not in the least to his discredit, for the woods are, after all, an amazingly good school in many of the practical affairs of life, cooking among them.

LOST.

A COUNTRY STORY.

BOWCROSSES and Arrowbys! When half a century ago country people in the State of New York talked about them, the two families always were verbally united, though everybody knew that Bowcrosses and Arrowbys would no more mix than oil and water. As to the Archers, very long ago, as far back as the '20's, they had no longer floated on the surface, but had sunk to the bottom. Yet those who busied themselves about family connections knew that Bowcrosses, Arrowbys, and Archers had all sprung from the old Archer stock. An Arrowby might perhaps call a Bowcross "cousin," but both of them entirely ignored Archers. Good big farms, well-tilled fields, handsome credits in country banks attested the thrift and business qualities of Bowcrosses and Arrowbys. With a turn toward culture, they went to good schools and colleges, held places of trust, insisted on recognition, commanded it, and hence family rivalries and bitter dislikes. As to Archers, shiftlessness had been their inheritance. One Archer, more adventurous than the rest, had gone to sea. Then Archers were always drifting about, never making a port. The last heard of Sailor Bill was that he had been picked up, the sole survivor of a shipwrecked vessel. It was not even likely that the Albany paper had printed the story of Bill Archer's shipwreck and rescue, and even had Bowcrosses or Arrowbys read it, there were hundreds of Archers who had to be drowned every year, and it was no business of theirs.

Old man Archer opened his door of a dull December afternoon, and looked at the wintry landscape. It was a relief to him to see his few frozen fields, for within-doors it was cheerless. There was his ailing wife, and but one gleam of happiness, his grandchild. "It was hard luck on Bill to lose his wife; and Bill—when are we to hear from him? Maybe something will turn up. Where was son Bill last? I disremember. Chiney Sea, or where? God knows how we are to winter it out! And me and my wife and that baby, the last of the race belike, for Bill he may never come back."

Slackum Corners had a post-office, a tavern, and lay half-way between the Arrowby and Bowcross farms. When John Bowcross came to Slackum Corners and the Union Tavern quite late of a December evening, having been driven there in his wagon, Mr. Tinkum, the landlord, received him with due honor. Mr. John Bowcross's instructions to his hired man were brief: "At sundown to-morrow night. Be careful of that bit of road a mile from the house. That axle was put on new a week ago. It has to last."

John Bowcross declared he was sleepy, tired, had eaten a late dinner, was not hungry, and would go at once to bed. All he wanted was that the landlord would take care of a bundle or two he had. Mr. Tinkum knew his man, and allowed him to have his own way.

Hardly had Mr. Bowcross been shown his room when there drove up another wagon, from the opposite direction. The landlady, in the dull evening light, saw who was its occupant, and was in a fever of excitement.

"If it isn't Miss Delia Arrowby! Sakes! what can bring her out this time of night? And with that Mrs. Tinkum opened wide the door.

"Nobody ill at the place, Miss Delia?" inquired the landlady breathlessly.

"No one. I want you to take care of me for the night. I have a little trip to make early to-morrow. A cup of tea, please, and a room. The room must be quite near to you, and nowhere else. Send some one to take charge of these bothersome packages. D'y' think it will snow to-morrow? Looks like it. Peter, drive home. Be here punctually at sundown to-morrow evening. Be careful. Do not drive hard. Those are new springs. I am tired of paying for new springs. Go now. Mrs. Tinkum, above all, be certain to tell your husband I want his team for to-morrow morning at ten, and a safe driver."

"Certainly, Miss Delia. Just as soon as I have seen you comfortable I will tell my husband."

When Mrs. Tinkum had imparted to Mr. Tinkum the news of the last arrival, the landlord whistled, as indicative of astonishment.

"Delia Arrowby here? You didn't tell her John Bowcross was a-putting up under this here roof of ourn, did you?" he inquired.

"Catch me at that! She's that contrary that had I let on that John Bowcross was to sleep here, just as likely she'd have taken to the road, and walked right home, though it be ten mile."

"Queer lot! And yet he was to have married her once. Them two sets of people have natural yearnings to fight like game chickens."

"She'll never see twenty-eight again, though she don't look it."

"John Bowcross must be close to the forties, and his temper gets wuss and wuss with his years, and occasionally he is that cantankerous and unbearable that there's no bearing with him. It's best we keeps them apart and unbeknownst to one anuther. She wants the team. That's all right. She shall have it. I'm a little unsartin about Jim, as must do the drivin'. He's a sober, steady darky, only he don't know the roads much ten miles from the Cornders. Did Miss Delia say where she was heading for?"

"No, not a word. She isn't handy to ask questions to. Now I'll fix her tea for her, and see to her generally."

Beds must have been comfortable, or perhaps it was the fall of the snow during that December night, muffling all the sounds, which made John Bowcross sleep so late. It was nine o'clock before he entered the tavern parlor. The first thing he said to the landlord was: "You have a good team? Of course you have."

"No man's two hundred, nor, for that, his two hundred and fifty, would buy 'em," answered the landlord, promptly.

"A fall of snow generally comes just before Christmas;" and Mr. Bowcross went to the window and looked out. "And it is in for snow all day. You said you had a good team?"

"Raised 'em from colts, and no man's two hundred and fifty, nor, for that, his three hundred, would buy 'em."

Then Mr. Bowcross turned sharply on Mr. Tinkum. "I am not in the horse-buying, but horse-hiring line, at this present moment." Then he added: "It is satisfactory for me to learn that your team is a good one—unnecessary to inform me of its merchantable value. I want to hire them, that is all."

"No, sir; no man's three hundred and fifty, nor, for that, his four hundred, would buy 'em; but whether they be on sale or livery, as you have remarked, it makes no matter of difference. You can't buy 'em, nor hire 'em nuther, because they are bespoke."

"Bespoke!" cried Mr. John Bowcross. "There never could be uttered such unmitigated nonsense! What right has a man who keeps a place of public resort to allow his team to be bespoken?"

"I am truly obleeged," said the landlord, very deliberately, with mock humility, "to them as honors this house with their patronage, and I be as polite and accommodatin' as the circumstances permits of; but I let you know, Mr. John Bowcross, that one born and bred in this here Slackum Cornders don't put up with nary aggerawatin' nor snappy nor persecutin' ways. That there team, it is true, was hired after you come. You didn't say no more about team nor turkey. You was sleepy and tired last night, and you turned in and took for granted that if there were sixty-five team of horses in these here stables of mine, you could have 'em all. Somebody who comed in afterward took 'em, and Bowcross or no Bowcross, though you has been to York and Albanëë, people, be they high or be they low, as resorts to this tavern, has to be civil."

"Mr. Bowcross, your breakfast," said Mrs. Tinkum, whose presence seemed to quell the irate Mr. Bowcross. Mr. Bowcross appeared uncertain what to do for a moment, but then followed the landlady, and presently Mr. Tinkum heard his guest and wife talking together. After a while back came Mr. Bowcross, apparently in a somewhat better temper.

"Mr. Tinkum, please do not tell me those horses of yours are worth five hundred dollars—or was it six hundred? Why did you not say at once the team was engaged by a lady? It is your amiable wife whose manners you might copy, sir, who has explained the matter. On such a day as this, snowing as it does, no woman ventures out. She naturally puts off her little trip until to-morrow. I take the team in her place."

"Oh, no, sir," said Mrs. Tinkum. "I know the lady, and she won't."

"She won't? Granting, then, that the unknown is the most perverse of her sex, bent on self-sacrifice, it is my, your, all our solemn duties, to persuade her to the contrary."

"You couldn't, indeed you couldn't persuade her," cried Mrs. Tinkum.

"As a gallant man I offer to accompany her, then. She might be going within a mile, or a half-mile or so, of where I am bound. I yield a point to the lady, and drop her near her destination—say quite up to the door—and then I continue my journey. Something else—she sha'n't pay a penny for team hire. It will be at my sole expense."

"She wouldn't, she couldn't," cried Mr. and Mrs. Tinkum, both shaking their heads.

"She must—she shall; that is, providing she is a reasonable human being," said Mr. Bowcross, decisively.

"Well, under ordinary circumstances, she is a reasonable human being—" Here Mrs. Tinkum came to a full stop.

"You do not mean to say that this is an extraordinary one?" inquired Mr. Bowcross, hotly.

In one breath Mr. and Mrs. Tinkum replied, "It is."

"Not a mad woman?" asked Mr. Bowcross.

"Not crazy mad."

"Can I see this obstinate paragon?" inquired Mr. Bowcross, gallantly.

"I don't know," replied Mrs. Tinkum, demurely.

"I fancy I am well known in this neighborhood, Mrs. Tinkum, as a gentleman," said Mr. Bowcross, his face whitening with anger.

"There isn't a woman nor girl in the whole land, Mr. Bowcross, I wouldn't put under your care, for there never was a low-bred nor mean Bowcross as I ever heard of," responded Mrs. Tinkum, warmly, "but that wouldn't help you."

"Well, what is it? See here, I am fast losing patience," cried Mr. Bowcross.

"That's it exactly. You always were losing your patience, and it was easy for you to get rid of it, for you always had so precious little. You quarrelled with the lady you want to be introduced to," said Mrs. Tinkum.

"I quarrel with a lady, Mr. Tinkum?"

"Yes. There never was a Bowcross that didn't fatten on a quar'l. It didn't make any matter with who, but if there was any preference it was a good all-round fight with an Archer or a Arrowby." This was what Mr. Tinkum said. Mr. and Mrs. Tinkum were now talking in an undertone.

Then John Bowcross burst out: "What on earth are you two people plotting together, whispering that way? Out with it. I am the last man in the world to play the fool with."

"Don't fire up so," cried Mrs. Tinkum. "We were trying to arrange matters, on the cat and dog plan, so that one couldn't devour the other. Decent people would be satisfied to stay in a comfortable warm house a day like this. The tavern is big enough for each of you to keep to your side of the house."

"Evidently it's a tigress you have caged up," said Mr. Bowcross.

"This here house ain't no menagerie, Mr. Bowcross, I should like to have you know," cried Mr. Tinkum, who was a very literal and matter-of-fact man. "You might as well hear it first as last. Miss Delia Arrowby came here just after you, and hired that no-account team. Now fix up this dratted nonsense as you please. I wash my hands of the whole biling."

"Miss Arrowby? She wants the team? In the Lord's name let her have it. To think of any woman wanting, insisting, determined, set on travelling on such a day as this! The wind is sure to rise and pile up the snow—make heavy drifts. Find out the direction Miss Arrowby is to take. I can't—I won't let that woman go alone. How about your driver? A good man, I hope?"

"Steady, yes; a decent colored man, but green about the roads five mile from here. He was raised on t'other side of the districk. I have half a mind to drive her myself."

"No, you won't, Hezekiah Tinkum; not if Miss Delia and Mr. John here was to go down on their knees before you. You'd be sure to ketch your death with rheumatism, and having me a-wearing out my soul a-worrying after you. No, sir, you sha'n't."

"Of course he must not, Mrs. Tinkum. I wouldn't have it," said Mr. Bowcross.

"Go and see her yourself, Mr. Bowcross. It won't be so much of a shock to her. Though I dursn't tell her last night, fearful she would raise the roof and show us her heels, this morning I up and told her, and I mustn't disguise that she took on powerful much," said Mrs. Tinkum.

"Does she hate me as much as that?" inquired Mr. Bowcross. "Then I had better not attempt seeing her."

"There's the team anyways, for sure enough Miss Delia's on the stair a-coming down," said Mr. Tinkum.

Miss Delia burst into the inn parlor. There was evidence on her part of an inclination to open hostilities.

"So, Mr. John Bowcross, from what I have overheard, you premeditate the capture of this sleigh, and to cap the climax you have expressed the desire to accompany me. Our roads lie very far apart, sir." And not adding a word more, Miss Arrowby swept out of the room. The landlord and landlady placed in the sleigh various wraps, shawls, and bundles, and helped Miss Arrowby in.

"Do be more careful," said Miss Arrowby, in a resentful manner. "Those are most positively not my packages. They may belong to that man. I have no idea of carrying off that man's property. Pray get me my own things. There, the rubbishing string has come off, and there goes a lot of foolish things into the straw. What on earth are they! To whom can that John Bowcross be carrying a Noah's ark?"

Just then Mr. Bowcross made his appearance, wrapped up in his heavy top-coat. His head was bare, for he held his low-crowned beaver in his hand.

"Miss Arrowby," he said, "there has been a very ridiculous mistake. Those foolish things are mine. Your packages I have here. Carrying this one, I took it carelessly, and the tail of a wooden horse has come out."

"Ah!" said Miss Arrowby, "men are so stupid—their fingers are all thumbs."

"Notwithstanding that, you are in the act of grinding under foot an entire collection of wooden animals. I am in no heart to dispute with you, Miss Arrowby. I had so wished making a journey to-day! Since you have the only means of conveyance Slackum Corner affords, why should I not accept the inevitable?"

"It is wise to be philosophical, Mr. Bowcross."

"Maybe it is, though it's a pitiable consolation."

"Pitiable! I don't want your pity."

"It isn't you I pity. I am selfish enough to reserve it all for myself, Delia."

"Delia! Since when have you received permission to use my first name?"

"Not for ten years in your hearing."

"Sentimental twaddle, Mr. John Bowcross. What's the use of your standing there hat in hand in an eleemosynary manner, as if begging for snow?" And she laughed, or appeared as if she wanted to laugh, but there was the faintest sound of distress in her voice. At a glance she had seen gray hairs on John Bowcross's head, and that quenched any attempts at apparent mirth.

"Miss Arrowby, you said our roads were apart, and maybe they are, but for God's sake let me take care of you to-day."

"I am going to Archer's. What harm can befall me?—a little snow? I disdain concealment, Mr. Bowcross. Archer's is not your destination."

"To Archer's! As I hope to be forgiven, that was where I wanted to go, and intend to go if I have to walk every foot of the way. So good-by, Delia; and as you will not give me a lift, at least join my foolish things to your foolish things, for it would be difficult for me to carry these packages some ten miles or more."

"John—John Bowcross, you are incomprehensible. Here have you been forgetting these Archers for many a long year."

"And you?—have you no twinges of conscience?"

"Yes, plenty of them. I am honest enough to confess them, and am trying to do better in the future."

"Take a wider scope, Delia; be comprehensive."

"Riddlemeree, Jack—Mr. John Bowcross. I can't afford to be lavish."

"There is so much to explain! If you would only hear me patiently! The Archers are not the only unfortunates."

"You will be snowed up standing there, Mr. Bowcross."

"See here, Miss Delia, owning stock yourself, you must know it isn't a good thing to have a waluable team a-standing still in a snow-storm like this," interposed Mr. Tinkum.

"It's a question of Tinkum's team, Miss Delia," said Mr. John Bowcross, smiling.

"It's a dreadfully contracted sleigh," said Delia, as a chair was put in by Mrs. Tinkum for the driver.

But Mr. Tinkum was out of patience; so was the driver and the pawing team. The landlord took Mr. John Bowcross, who did not resist, and put him bodily into the sleigh, and before the lady could say a word, off they were.

It was a long journey. At first little was said, and that of a commonplace character. Anything like effusiveness Miss Arrowby promptly checked, but it was a narrow sleigh—all comfortable country sleighs are "närrur." Not that material wherewith sleighs are constructed is expensive, but country builders seem to have understood that to wedge in occupants was the only safeguard against low temperatures.

About noon the snow ceased falling. It might be only a lull in the storm. Then they came to puzzling cross-roads. There might be four or five distinct and separate ways, all snow-covered. Stuck up somewhere was a sign-post. There was a halt. Which track led to Archer's? That ridiculous finger-post, hidden as was the lettering with snow and ice, told no more than had nothing ever been painted on it. The driver beat at it with his whip-stock. John Bowcross stood up in the sleigh and peered and peered and could make out nothing.

"That sign-post, Delia, is like a good intention," said Mr. Bowcross.

"Smothered up, hidden under false-impressions," added Miss Arrowby.

When two people absolutely take the words out of one another's mouths there must be an undercurrent of sympathy.

"Anyway, Delia, that sign must be read. There is only one method of managing it, and it is to cut it down."

"Well, I never should have thought of that," said Delia.

An axe was taken from the sleigh. Mr. John Bowcross, with a vigorous chop or two, laid low the enigmatical finger-post, which, when scraped, disclosed its secrets. But he had done more than that. He had cut the Gordian knot. Archer's was still two miles away.

When Mr. Bowcross got into the sleigh, his hand stole quietly under the buffalo-robe, until he held Miss Arrowby's hand in his.

He might have kissed her, but then there was the driver. The sleigh was a small one, and that colored man was not seated very solidly in his chair, and he had a tendency to lurch backward when least expected.

Before arriving at Archer's, two very positive arrangements and agreements had been entered into. Firstly, John Bowcross and Delia Arrowby were to be married. Secondly, the old Archers were to be cared for; the little Archer boy was to be fed, clothed, and educated. "The foolish things" were to be given Little Bill on the morrow, and the toys came, precisely as they should, on a Christmas Eve.

When the two people came back, rather late, to Slackum Corners, they had the least bit of a tiff.

"I am going to pay for the hire of this team, Mr. Tinkum," said Mr. John Bowcross.

"Indeed you are not. Who, pray, bespoke this team? I leave that to you, Mr. Tinkum," inquired Miss Arrowby.

"Dear, I must exercise my authority just once, or I should be lost," said Mr. Bowcross.

"No, you wouldn't," interposed Miss Arrowby, with no little pride. "Lost, indeed! You would be quite sure to find me again, Jack."

"So I would, Delia. We will make a compromise. Let us divide—won't you?"

No, she wouldn't; and Delia didn't. B. P.

THE NIECE OF BARRIOS.

I SPENT one Christmas Day under a summer sky, and I will never forget the circumstances that followed it. It was several years ago, though I remember it as if it were yesterday. I was one of the few Americans in the city of Guatemala, in the year 1882, I think it was.

Christmas Eve I had attended the court ball given by President Barrios, and there I met Dolores Estrada, his niece, the most beautiful woman I had ever met. The ball was given in honor of her graduation from the convent and the completion of her seventeenth year. She appeared that night dressed in the Indian costume of her race, and its simple beauty only made her more bewitching. Young myself, I easily became a victim to her girlish charms; but I learned with much regret she had a lover, Colonel Rogero Terrari, an attaché on her uncle's staff.

Christmas Day was warm, yet it did not prevent all Guatemala from attending mass at the cathedral. Just as I entered the sacred building, Señorita Dolores was kneeling at the foot of the shrine of the Mother and Child. Her face was flushed, and her dark melting eyes were filled with tears, as she devoutly said her prayers. Would that I had never seen her at that shrine again, and could remember her only as she appeared that day!

The troublesome times that followed fast upon the New-Year are a matter of history. A pact was formed between the republics of Honduras, Costa Rica, San Salvador, and Nicaragua to form the United States of Central America, and President Barrios, on the New-Year, proclaimed himself Generalisimo and Director-General of the united republics, to hold office until the Senates of the different states could convene and elect his successor.

Stirring as the times were, the situation grew in interest when three of the republics entered into an intrigue against Barrios and the federation, Honduras alone remaining true to her compact. The designing Presidents of Costa Rica, San Salvador, and Nicaragua telegraphed Barrios that they would not ratify the agreement they had entered into with the other states. Then it was Barrios sent his famous despatch: "We will have a federation of Central American states if we have to fight for it. You have your choice." They chose war. Barrios, with a well-equipped army of 35,000 men, took the field in person against an army of 50,000 men raised in the three rebellious republics. This was early in March.

In the first two battles victory perched upon the banners of Barrios, and we in Guatemala were happy. In the rejoicings that followed victory I often met Dolores, and had, in fact, become her tutor in the English language; while she, in turn, was paying me by teaching me love and Spanish at the same time.

Then came the third great battle, the one in which the fate of five republics was at stake, for sturdy Honduras, with her little army, had joined Barrios in this final battle. I was present in person on the field to bring the first news of defeat or victory to Señorita Dolores. Well do I remember the day. The battle commenced, victory again seemed to be with Barrios; but no, a whole regiment in the front of the line of battle suddenly threw down its arms and left the field. This act stampeded the army. Barrios rode to the front, grasped a banner in his hand, and soon collected his scattered forces by his dauntless bravery, and again the tide was turned in his favor. A sudden puff of smoke, a cry, and Barrios fell from his horse, dead. He was in advance of his army, which halted in dismay. I counted seventeen brave fellows who went after the body of their loved leader, but never returned. Then came brave Rogero Terrari, undaunted by the fate of the others. He rushed into the open space between the lines, the target for a thousand rifles. He picked the body of his dead general from the ground, and returned to his own line in apparent safety. But he was bleeding from a dozen wounds, and fell dead under his burden. So the battle ended, and I am left to tell the story of how my rival died.

Slowly I rode back to the city, hoping some other messenger would tell her of the battle which meant so much to her, so much to me; but, alas! it was my fate that I should be the first to break to her the awful news that robbed her at once of a lover and an uncle. "Lola," I said, after telling her the awful news that seemed to chill her heart, "what can I do for you? Can I do anything to ease the pain? I am ready to do anything."

She turned her face to me and said: "Señor, you are my only friend. Will you go with me to the cathedral, where you said you saw me Christmas Day?" I eagerly consented; but what fear filled my heart as I gazed upon the beautiful creature by my side! No tears dimmed her lustrous eyes; there was no tremor in her soft sweet voice; yet I knew she was undergoing intense, unspeakable agony. Through the streets, crowded with excited, saddened people, we quickly wended our way to the great cathedral, neither speaking a word. At last we entered the portals of the church, and then, in a sad sweet voice, she said:

"Señor, I thank you. I wish to pray alone. May the Mother of God bless you for your kindness to me this day! Stay here and wait for me, and good-by till we meet again."

I watched her as she walked down the gloomy aisle of the old cathedral straight to the shrine of the Mother and the Child. She gazed a moment upon the infant Jesus, knelt, looked back at me, and seemed to smile, and then I thought she was about to continue her devotions. I was watching her intently. Suddenly I saw a gleam of silver, a flash of light. A low cry followed, and Lola had fallen forward. Horror-stricken, I rushed madly up the aisle to the foot of the marble shrine. A little stream of blood slowly trickled down the broad white steps. I raised up the wounded girl and pressed her to my breast. She was dead! No; she smiled, and whispered, "Till we meet again," and all was over. She had taken her own life on the very spot where she had been the happiest, where she had been christened, confirmed, and where her betrothal had been made public.

The small solace of attending her funeral was denied me. After the defeat and death of Barrios, the clerical party assumed the reins of government, and at once ordered the American colony to leave the city in twenty-four hours. If I should live a thousand years, I would never forget my Christmas under summer skies.

A DISCOVERED PEARL.

By MARY E. WILKINS.

"WONDER what's goin' on in the church?"

Gilman Marlow stopped and stared slowly over at the church. It was a little white building with five pointed windows on each side. The windows were all streaming with light now, and the bright light showed from the door too, for it was open, and people were going in.

Opposite the church, where Marlow stood, the road was lined with thickly set hemlock and pine trees. Behind them was the graveyard: one peering between the branches could see the white stones. The gap for the entrance was a little beyond. There had been a heavy snowfall the day before, and all the trees were loaded with snow now; the boughs bent down heavily; the lowest ones touched the ground.

Marlow stood among the white branches awhile, and looked over at the church with a sort of dull curiosity; then he kept on up the street. He met many little hurrying groups, and he turned out for them readily, plunging into the deep snow at the side of the cleared path.

Some of the people turned and stared after him. "Who was that?" he heard some one say. "I don't know," said another.

"I guess you don't," muttered Marlow, with a faint chuckle. When he came in front of a lighted window anywhere he showed up large and burly, an old rough great-coat shrugged tightly around him, an old fur cap pulled down to his ears. He limped badly.

About a quarter of a mile from the church there was a large white farm-house. The great square front yard was full of smooth snow. Some old rose-bushes under the house walls pricked softly through it, but there were not a foot track anywhere. All the windows in the house were dark. Marlow stood looking up at the house. A great clod of damp snow struck on his shoulders. It had fallen from a maple-tree which reached out over his head. He shook it off.

"Guess I'll go round to the back door an' see if I can raise anybody," said he, out loud.

"There ain't anybody livin' in that house now," said a voice.

Marlow looked around. A small woman stood beside him; her little upturned face stood out of the dark with its soft paleness, but he could not distinguish the features.

"Is that so?" said he.

"Yes; there 'ain't anybody been livin' there for some time." The woman caught her breath as she talked.

"Then the old man's dead."

"He died more'n three years ago. The place has been shut up ever since."

"I wonder if I could get in there? I s'pose somebody's got the key. You don't happen to know who, do you? I'm Marlow's son. I don't know who you are, but I don't s'pose it's likely you're anybody that knows me."

"Gilman, is that you?"

"I s'pose it is."

"I knew you the minute you spoke."

"You did? Well, I'm glad of it. I didn't count on anybody in the whole town rememberin' the sound of my voice. But I'll own I can't say as much for myself."

"Don't you know— I live in the next house."

The man hesitated. "It ain't Lucy—well I don't know as it is Lucy Glynn, now." He ended with a little uncertain laugh.

"Yes, it is."

Marlow saw, to his great amazement, that the woman was crying. She was shaken all over with her sobs. She leaned up against the snowy fence. He looked at the house, then at her. He did not know what to do. He had no idea what she was crying about. "I'm real glad to see you, Lucy," said he, finally, in a nervous, apologetic tone. She made no reply. "Is your father livin'?"

"Yes, father's livin'."

Marlow shuffled his feet in the snow. He looked at Lucy, then at the house. "Anything I can do for you?" he said at last, in an embarrassed, solemn way. His face felt hot.

"No." Suddenly the woman straightened herself. "I've got the key to the house," said she, in a tremulous voice, which caught at every word to recover itself.

"Oh, you have!"

"Yes; it's been left at our house ever since he died. If you'll go back with me—"

"All right."

The woman went on ahead, her dark skirts dabbled in the snow. Marlow followed, his eyes on her little narrow shoulders, which had somehow a meek air about them. She gathered her gray shawl up primly on her two arms, and kept it tightly pulled around her. She walked with a little nervous scud. Marlow tramped heavily after her. They had but a little way to go.

"What's goin' on in the church to-night?" said he. "I saw it was all lighted up when I came by."

"They're havin' a Christmas tree there."

"I declare, it is the night before Christmas, ain't it?"

"Didn't you know it?"

"Well, I guess I'd kind of lost my reckonin'. I haven't thought much about Christmas lately. Folks make a great deal more account of it than they used to, anyhow."

"Yes, they do."

The two front windows of the small house in the next lot were golden with light. Some green plants showed in them; the white curtains were drawn only over the upper sashes.

Lucy turned into the gate. As she did so she glanced around at Marlow, and noticed for the first time how he limped. "Why, you're lame," she said.

"Yes. I hurt my knee awhile ago, and then the rheumatism got into it. I've been in the hospital a spell."

The woman gave a little cry. "The hospital!"

"Yes."

"Let me help you up the steps."

"You!"

"I'm real strong."

"Oh, I can get up the steps well enough. It ain't very bad now; I've got kind of used to it. I'd feel lonesome without it, you know. Well, it's better to have an ache stick to you than nothin', I s'pose." Marlow chuckled feebly.

Lucy opened the outer door, then an inner one. The entry was so small that she had to step out of it into the room before her guest could enter at all. There came a rush of warm air, sweet with heliotrope and oleander, and pungent with geraniums.

Marlow sniffed it in, and blinked in the light. "I'll wait here," said he. "You'd better shut your door or you'll cold your house all off."

"Why, you're comin' in?"

"No, thank ye; it wouldn't pay. I'll just stand here till you get the key."

"Ain't you comin' in, just to get warm a minute?"

"No, thank ye; I guess I won't. I'll come some other time. I'll take the key now and go—well, I don't know as I'll say home—over there." He waved his hand toward the dark mass of buildings at the left. Lucy stood looking at him a minute.

"Why don't you shet the door?—you're coldin' the nouse all off," called a voice out of the light and warmth. "Hey!" called the voice again, "why don't you shet the door? Is that you?"

Then Lucy swung to the inner door and stepped up to Marlow. "You must come in. I don't see what you're thinkin' of. Here's that house all cold and dark. It ain't fit to go into; it's been shut up. You'll catch your death of cold; and you're lame; and there ain't—anybody—there." Her voice sounded weakly sharp; at the end it broke into a sob again.

"Great heavens! she can't want me to come in as bad as that?" he said to himself. "I'll get along well enough," he said, ardently, after a minute; "I'm used to 'most everything. 'Twouldn't be worth while for me to come in."

"I was goin' to get you some supper."

"Oh, thank ye; but it don't make any difference to me whether I have any supper or not."

"It ain't any trouble," Lucy said, faintly.

Marlow stood looking irresolutely at her. He could not believe that she was in earnest about wanting him to enter. "I'll track the snow all over your clean house," he said, finally.

That signified that he was coming in. "That ain't any matter," said Lucy, and again threw open the sitting-room door.

Marlow stamped heavily on the door-step, and shook his shoulders; then he went in clumsily. The room was small. Out of his very humility and meekness he saw himself larger than he was; there was a swift multiplication, in his own estimation, of his rough clothes and his rough figure. He held his cap in his hand, and did not dare to stir for a moment. In the corner near him was a great pot with an oleander-tree, its spraying top all pink with blossoms. There was a little yellow stand with pots of geranium and heliotrope on it. Take a step forward, and there was an old man warming his feet at an air-tight stove.

"Here's somebody come to see us, father," said Lucy.

The old man shrank back. He ignored Marlow, who held out his hand, and mumbled something. "I dun know who 'tis," he said, turning to his daughter.

"Why, it's Mr. Marlow, father—Gilman Marlow. He used to live next door—don't you know?"

"'Tain't, nuther; he's dead." The old man set his lips together like a child.

"Yes, father, old Mr. Marlow's dead; he died three years ago. But this ain't him; this is his son Gilman. Don't you remember him?"

"The one that sort of slumped through?"

Lucy started pitifully. Marlow colored; then he grinned. "Yes, I reckon that just fits my case," said he, with a sort of embarrassed and shamefaced mirthfulness. "I'm the one. I've slumped through ever since I come into the world."

"Father, can't you shake hands with Gilman?"

The old man reached out his hand. His thin mouth curved up at the corners, the wrinkles around his eyes deepened. He would have looked quizzical had he not looked so feeble. Marlow grasped the old hand; then he gave Lucy his cap and coat, and seated himself in the chair which she had proffered him. It was a calico-covered rocker. He sat in it stiffly. It seemed to him that it would be indecorous to relax himself into comfort.

Something brushed his head. He looked up, and it was a soft spray of the oleander blossoms. He moved his chair quickly. Lucy had gone out; he could hear her stepping about in the next room. He wondered vaguely what she was doing. He had no longer any feeling of resistance to her plans. He was nearly exhausted. He was just out of the hospital, and he had walked five miles through the snow that day. His knee began to pain him now. His large, rough-complexioned face was pale.

The old man eyed him intently. He had something which looked like a brown cashmere dress across his knees, and another part of it lay on a chair beside him. "What's she a-doin' on?" he asked Marlow.

"I don't know."

"Lucy!" called her father; "Lucy!"

"What is it, father?" called Lucy back from the other room.

"What air you a-doin' of?"

"Makin' a little tea for Mr. Marlow."

"What air you a-makin' tea for him for?" There was no reply. "What is she a-makin' tea for you for?" asked the old man of Marlow.

"I don't know."

"She never makes any for me this time o' night. 'Twouldn't do me no harm, nuther, a cup on't warm afore I went to bed." Suddenly the old man caught up the brown cashmere on his lap and threw it over to Marlow. "There," said he, "you kin pick the bastin's out o' that while you're settin'. I've got to pick 'em out of the waist on't."

Marlow looked at the brown cashmere in bewilderment. "What?"

"Pick the bastin's out—them long white stitches in the seams. Lucy dress-makes, an' I hev to pick out all the bastin's. It's ruther more'n I want to do some days. You might jest as well take holt while you air a-settin'."

Marlow began awkwardly pulling at the white thread.

Presently Lucy opened the door. "I've got some tea made," said she, with gentle stiffness. There was a delicate meagreness about the little figure in the best black silk gown. She wore a full white ruche around her slender neck; she held her thin chin erect above it, but her whole head seemed to droop a little. There were bright spots on her cheeks, which were thin, but still softly curved.

Marlow eyed her with admiration, which was the only distinct sentiment which shaped itself out of his bewilderment and fatigue. Lucy had been very pretty, and was now; still she was not as pretty nor as young as she looked to him. He viewed her in the same glass in which he saw himself reflected. Her face beside his own, which thrilled him with humility, got a wonderful beauty of contrast. He eyed his poor clothes, then her nice black silk; the black gloss of it on her shoulders, the cunning loopings, a flutter of black lace on the over-skirt, filled him with respect and awe.

"Wa'n't you goin' out somewhere?" he asked, with feeble politeness. He got up clumsily, and let the brown cashmere slide to the floor.

"No; I was just goin' to look in at the Christmas tree a minute. I wa'n't goin' to stay. Father, what have you done?"

She picked up the dress, and looked at him and Marlow.

"I 'ain't done nothin' but set him pickin' out a few bastin's," said the old man, defiantly. "He might jest as well be workin' as me."

"Oh, father, you hadn't ought to!"

"I didn't mind," said Marlow, stupidly.

"Father's real feeble and childish," Lucy whispered, when she and her guest were in the other room. "I set him pickin' out bastin's to keep him contented. He frets about doin' it, but he likes it. He's just as uneasy as he can be if he gets out of work."

"It's a great deal better for him, I should think," Marlow assented.

"'STOP WORKIN' A MINUTE, AN' LET'S TALK,' SAID MARLOW."

The fragrance of the tea stole into his nostrils. The nicely piled white bread gave out a sweet odor of its own.

Lucy had set out her mother's china cups and saucers—white, with a little green vine on the rims. She offered him her best damson sauce and her fruit cake. Marlow ate without tasting. He was trying to remember something. He remembered it better and better; it was quite clear in his mind by the time he was left to himself in the little sleeping-room upstairs. It was Lucy's, which she had given up to him. She would sleep on the sitting-room lounge. A little picture hung over the bed. It caught his attention; it had a familiar look: then he recollected. He had given it to Lucy Glynn twenty years ago; they had thought they were in love with each other, though little had been said about it. It was just before he went away. Gradually he recalled some words, a kiss or two. He had almost forgotten. Now the memory came, it was sweet. He felt as if he were thrusting back his head, old and weary and grizzled, out of this wintry misery into some sweet old spring which he had passed. He looked back at it with pitiful regret.

"Why didn't I marry Lucy," he said to himself, "and stay at home, and settle down, and behave myself?"

The next day was Christmas. It snowed again heavily. Marlow got his key and tramped over to his old home through the snow-drifts. So far as he knew, the place was all his. It was quite a little fortune to him, this substantial house, with its environment of sixty acres of meadow and woodland. He could not believe in the reality of it; a whimsical doubt as to the rightfulness of his claim possessed him. He felt as if he were extending his hand for a gift which was begrudged. It was natural enough that he should feel so; he could not remember his father as ever giving him anything willingly. If Gilman Marlow had led a hard life, there had been no parental love and softness to point at as the cause of it. Marlow had a few cents in his pocket. These seemed to him a much more tangible property than this solid estate which he was examining. He walked through the bitter cold rooms with a feeling as if he intruded. His father dead became to him a more certain possessor than if living. He saw his father's coat and hat hanging on a peg in the kitchen, and he turned away like a culprit.

After a little he went out in the storm again. He thought he might as well see the man who Lucy had told him had charge of the estate. His name was Nelson; he was one of the select-men. Marlow had to pass the church and the graveyard to reach his house. The evergreen branches hung lower than ever; the new snow-flakes softly bent down the long slim sprays of the graveyard bushes until they lay on the ground; the mildewed fronts of the slanting old gravestones were hung with irregular, shifting snow-garlands.

Marlow stopped and looked in the solemn white enclosure. The snow settled softly upon him. There was no wind; everything was very still. Somewhere over there was his father's grave. He brushed away some tears with the back of his hand. "Good Lord," he muttered, "I ain't got much, an' that's a fact." Then he went on. It was a quarter of a mile further to the select-man's house.

It was noon when he returned along the same road. The snow had gathered a good deal, but he seemed to walk with greater ease—at any rate he walked faster.

He passed his father's house, and went straight to the Glynns'. He knocked, and the old man shuffled to the door. "Lucy's gone," he said, querulously. "She's been gone all the forenoon, an' I dun know whar she is. It's dinner-time now, an' thar ain't a pertater on, nor nothin', an' I've been a-pickin' out bastin's ever since daylight. I wish you'd find out whar she's gone, an' send her home."

"Well, I'll see," said Marlow. Then he plodded around to the side door of his own house. It opened directly into the kitchen. There was a good fire in the stove, and Lucy stood beside it cooking some eggs. A pot with potatoes was steaming and bubbling over. The table was set out, with a white cloth on it.

"Why, you here?" said Marlow.

Lucy bent over her frying eggs. "I thought I'd get you a little somethin' to eat, seein' you wa'n't willin' to come to our house again. There's a couple of pies in the oven, an'—"

"Lucy," said Marlow, suddenly, "what made you pay up the interest on that mortgage?"

Lucy suddenly turned white. "What do you mean?" she stammered.

"Nelson told me all about it. What made you do it?"

"Mr. Nelson said he wouldn't tell."

"He didn't mean to. I guessed it from somethin' he said, an' then I made him tell me. I think I ought to know it. Lucy, he said you'd put a mortgage on your house to pay up that back interest-money, so it shouldn't be foreclosed. Did you?"

"It ain't worth talkin' about."

"An' then you've paid the interest an' taxes ever since, so I shouldn't lose the place. I don't see how you did it."

"I've had all the dress-makin' I could do." Lucy lifted the frying-pan off the stove. Her hands trembled.

"Stop workin' a minute, an' let's talk," said Marlow.

Lucy set the pan on the hearth, and stood waiting. She cast her eyes down; her face twitched nervously.

"Look here, Lucy, what made you do it?"

"You—was away, an' you didn't know about it."

"How did you know it was worth while—that I'd ever come back?"

"I thought you might."

"You didn't know."

"Mr. Nelson said you would. He got news that you was livin' once; somebody'd seen you; then he lost track of you."

"What made you do it?"

"I thought you hadn't ought to lose the place."

"Well, you shall have the money part of it made up to you." Marlow was silent for a minute. "Lucy," said he, finally, "I never was so beat in my life as I was when Nelson told me that this mornin'. I've been thinkin'— Look here, didn't we go together a little once, years and years ago?"

Lucy turned paler. "There ain't any use in bringin' that up," she said, with a certain dignity.

"I want to know about it. Lucy, did I treat you mean? We wa'n't much more'n children, were we? We didn't talk about gettin' married, did we? We just thought we liked each other, an' kept round together a little while before I went away. That was all, wa'n't it?"

"Yes," whispered Lucy, faintly. Suddenly she put her hands up to her face.

Marlow took a step toward her; then he went back. "Don't cry," said he. "Lucy, see here, I'm goin' to ask you somethin'. Didn't you forget, all this time? Lucy, tell me."

She shook her head.

Marlow shut his mouth tight. He partly turned his head away. Then he spoke again. "Look here, Lucy, I'm goin' to tell you the truth: I hadn't remembered as well as you had."

"I didn't—suppose you had." She turned with a little state, and tried to move toward the door.

"Don't go; I've got somethin' I want to say." He hesitated a moment; then he went on. His face was hot. He had an honest, embarrassed air, like a boy. "I wanted to say that— Well, I thank you more'n I ever thanked any human bein' in my life. I'd lay down an' die, if it could do you any good, to show you that I did. An'—if—I'd come home different, if I'd got rich, or if I'd even come home decent—if I'd behaved myself, and if I looked fit and was fit to be seen beside you—I'd ask you to marry me, an' do all I could to pay you for thinkin' of me all this time; but as 'tis there ain't any use speakin' of that. All I can say is, I wish the last twenty years was to live over."

Lucy gathered a shawl about her, and turned to go. "I've got to go home and get father's dinner," she said, brokenly. "There ain't any use in bringin' all this up."

"I don't s'pose there is much, but I kind of wanted to speak of it," said Marlow, blushing deeper. "Thank you for gettin' my dinner."

"That's nothin'."

He watched her going with a sinking heart.

"She wouldn't think of havin' me now," he said to himself.

Lucy was half out of the yard, when she turned and came back. Marlow opened the door quickly. There she stood, her knees trembling. She gasped for breath between her words.

"There's—one thing—I didn't mean you to think—I didn't—want—you to think that it would—make any difference to me because—you wa'n't rich or—"

"Lucy, you don't mean to say that you'd have me as I am now?" Marlow took hold of one of her thin arms and pulled her in softly. He led her back to the stove; then he stood looking at her again. "Good Lord, Lucy!" he said, "you can't think anything of me, the way I am now!"

"I don't see why you ain't just as well as you ever was."

"I ain't worth this," said Marlow. He put his arm around Lucy and kissed her forehead.

She stood stiffly; then she released herself, and went over and looked out of a window.

"I'm afraid you don't think enough of me," she said, presently, without looking around.

"I guess you needn't worry about that. I know I 'ain't been thinkin' about you all these years, as much as you have, accordin' to what you say about me. But—I'll put it this way." He colored and half laughed. These little flights of fancy were natural to him; he took them in his most honest moments; but he was always a little shamefaced about it. "Well, s'pose some day—you know I've been round foreign countries an' on sea-shores a good deal—s'pose some day I'd come across a pearl caught into some sea-weeds, where I hadn't no idea of findin' it. Well, I guess it wouldn't have made much difference to me whether or no I'd been thinkin' about that pearl for twenty years, or whether I'd ever seen it an' forgotten it. There'd been the pearl, an' I'd been the man that had it. I'll think enough of you—you needn't bother about that. I don't know what I'd be made of if I didn't. Good Lord! to think of me havin' *you!*"

After Lucy had been home and attended to her father's wants, she returned and spent all the afternoon making the house comfortable for Marlow.

It was sunset when she went home the last time. It had stopped snowing, and there was a clear, yellow sky in the west. A flock of sparrows flew whistling around one of the maples. A sled loaded with Christmas greens was creaking down the road. One could hear children's voices in the distance. Lucy Glynn sped along. Whether wisely or not, she was full of all Christmas joy. She had given at last her Christmas gift, which she had been treasuring for twenty years.

DON M. DICKINSON.

Mr. Don Manuel Dickinson, of Michigan, who has been appointed Postmaster-General to succeed Mr. Vilas, was born at Port Ontario, New York, in January, 1846, his family being of New England origin. His parents removed, while he was an infant, to Michigan, and lived for a time on an island in the St. Clair River, and subsequently in the city of Detroit. After passing through the public schools of that city, he was prepared for college by a private tutor, and entered Michigan University, where it became necessary for him to support himself. He graduated from the law department of that institution, and entered upon the practice of his profession in Detroit at the age of twenty-one. His progress was rapid, and for some years he has held a leading position at the bar in the Northwest. He has been connected with many important cases, and carried on a long contest in defence of the jurisdiction of the State against the encroachments of the Federal judiciary under the bankrupt law, in which he was successful. He has taken a prominent part in the litigation against the Bell telephone patent, and made the argument before the Supreme Court in behalf of the Drawbaugh claimants. He began early to take an active part in politics, and in 1872 was Secretary of the Democratic State Committee, and an ardent supporter of Greeley. He was indignant at the failure of his party to give full support to the candidate, and wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Committee renouncing his connection with the party. He was, however, an admirer of Mr. Tilden, and in 1876 renewed his interest in politics, and acted as chairman of the State Committee. He was a delegate to the Democratic National Conventions of 1880 and 1884, and since the latter date has been a member of the National Committee. He has never before sought or held public office. He is a man of scholarly tastes and of high social standing, and has declared his full sympathy with the course of the present Administration and the principles of civil service reform.

DON M. DICKINSON, OF MICHIGAN, THE NEW POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

A GREAT LOG RAFT.

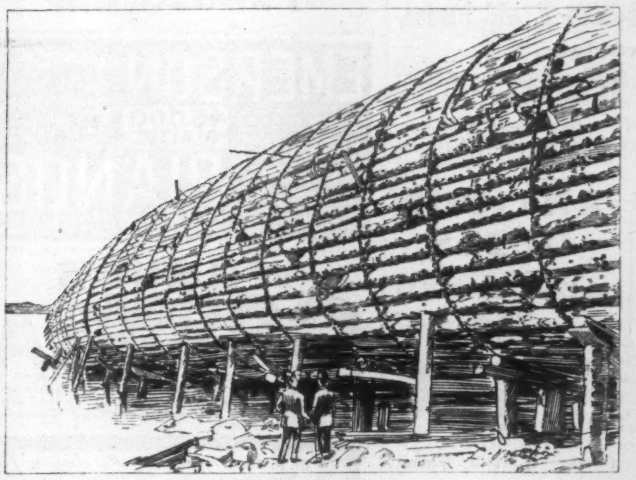
On the 30th of November the steam-ship *Miranda*, of 1500 tons, left New York, under charter, for the purpose of towing back to that city a prodigious raft of logs from Port Joggins, Nova Scotia. She is to use a 15-inch hemp hawser, fastened to the 2-inch centre chain which runs the whole length of the raft, and two 10-inch hemp hawsers passing one on each side of the raft, and connected to it about 75 feet from its forward end with 1½-inch chains. The tow will be 1000 feet astern of the steam-ship.

The great raft was launched at Two Rivers, Nova Scotia, on the 15th of November, and then remained at anchor in the bay awaiting the *Miranda*. It contains 25,000 sticks of spruce and pine timber, from 35 to 95 feet in length, and a great quantity of beech, birch, and maple timber, making a total of 4,500,000 feet. The diameter of the sticks runs from 12 inches to 36 at the butts, and from 6 inches to 10 at the points. It cost the owner, Mr. James D. Leary, of New York, when launched and ready to tow, between $31,000 and $32,000, and the contract price for towing it to his basin on Newtown Creek, Long Island, opposite New York, is $3500, exclusive of the cost of the hawsers.

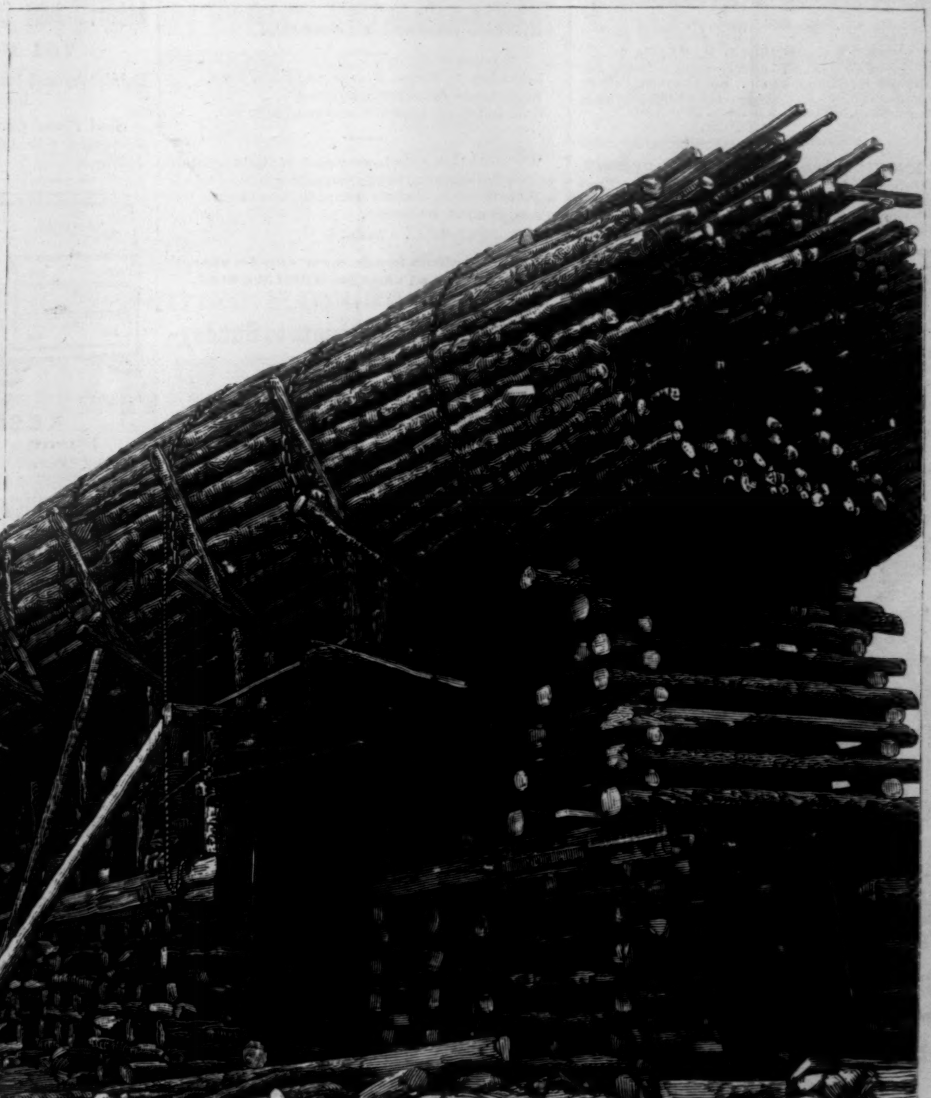
The method of constructing the raft is new, and has been patented in this country, Canada, and Europe. It required six months, with the employment of forty-five men, to build it and to lay the ways for launching. These ways are constructed permanently, will last for many years, and are capable of launching a series of such rafts. They cost about $9000, and this item is to be taken in in estimating the total cost of the undertaking. The chains alone cost nearly $3500, but will answer for making up other rafts. A distinguishing feature in the system as patented is this arrangement of chains for binding the structure together. They include the centre chain, by which it is towed, side chains to keep the logs from working apart and drifting backward during the towing, and still other chains binding the whole together to prevent spreading out. The dimensions of the raft are given as 585 feet in length, 62 in width, and 37 in depth, the weight being 9000 tons. Thus it is nearly ten times as long as wide, and about twice as wide as deep. The necessary tapering to give it something of a cigar shape is partly secured by stowing the timber with the butts toward the centre and the points toward the ends of the raft. To give the mass compactness, solidity, and strength, the interlapping is done with great care and skill, so as to leave as few spaces for the motion of the round logs as their different lengths and sizes will allow.

The launching of the raft was an interesting event. It took place from ways 1200 feet in length, the structure moving very slowly at first, but faster with its momentum, until it cleared the 1000 feet intervening and reached the water in a little over half a minute, without the parting of a chain or the slightest change of shape. Then the cradle was removed, and the raft was found to draw only 19½ feet, or considerably less than had been expected. This result was the fruit of several years' planning and experimenting with rafts composed of logs cut to nearly the full length of the trees, and bound together by chains in such a way as to give the mass more nearly the shape of a vessel. One such raft was undertaken near Two Rivers two years ago, and completed in the summer of 1886, but it proved a failure from the breaking of the ways after the mass had moved about 200 feet toward the water. Instead of abandoning the attempt, the raft was taken apart and rebuilt, with the results we have already recorded.

The object of bringing timber to New York in this manner is to get the longest and largest logs here, since vessels trading to Nova Scotia cannot bring any sticks exceeding 65 feet. Those of greater length come from Michigan and Ohio by rail, which is expensive, as it takes three or four cars to carry them. The present raft is brought here by Mr. Leary for his own use in ship-building, and in the construction of docks and piers, but he has also contracts now started with Messrs. Havemeyers & Elder, J. Sergeant Cram, J. J. Coogan, the Weidman Cooperage Company, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, and the West Shore Railroad Company, to use all the timber. The success of this experiment would doubtless have great effect on the lumber business in the matter of transportation.



THE RAFT BEFORE LAUNCHING.



THE GREAT LUMBER RAFT SENT BY SEA FROM NOVA SCOTIA TO NEW YORK.—From Photographs.

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN.

Breathe through thy reeded pipes, great Pan,
 and stay
The wandering footsteps of thy white-fleeced
 sheep,
Where with unweanèd lambs they feed and
 sleep
In thornless pastures of glad Arcady.
Breathe the last sheep call, sound the last sweet
 notes
To nymph and dryad, through thy fair domain;
For soon the dewy isles shall know thy reign
Is over. Now, e'en now, there sways and floats
The sound of glad-voiced singing from the hills
Of Judah, while a Star kisses the night
Into eternal splendor, as its light
Over a Galilean manger thrills.
Farewell, great Pan! Welcome this new glad
 morn!
For lo, beneath the Star, the King is born!

Lucy E. Tilley.

A TRIPLE ALLIANCE.

Unhappily for the wretched victim of their assaults, dyspepsia, constipation, and biliousness are faithful allies. When one of these foes attacks the system, the other two speedily follow in its wake, and successively make their onslaught. Successively, but not successfully, if Hostetter's Stomach Bitters be used to repel the onset. The Bitters as easily extirpates these monsters as St. George is depicted in the act of doing to the dragon in the steel vignette upon the glass bottles which contain the medicine. Their flight, like their advance, is nearly simultaneous. Their mutuality destroyed, they precipitately retreat, leaving health master of the position and strongly entrenched by the Bitters. This grand fortifier is also a reliable bulwark against the insidious assaults of malarial disease, and stops the approach of rheumatism. It, moreover, relieves nervous complaints, and imparts vigor to the weak.—[*Adv.*]

A GOOD REPUTATION.

"*Brown's Bronchial Troches*" have been before the public many years, and are everywhere acknowledged to be the best remedy for all throat troubles.

Mrs. S. H. Elliott, Ridgefield, Conn., says: "*I have never been without them for the last thirty years. Would as soon think of living without breath.*"

They quickly relieve Coughs, Sore Throat, and Bronchial Affections. For sale everywhere, and only in boxes.—[*Adv.*]

No Christmas or New-Year's Table should be without a bottle of Angostura Bitters, the world-renowned appetizer of exquisite flavor. Be sure to get the genuine article, manufactured only by Dr. J. G. B. Siegert & Sons.—[*Adv.*]

ADVICE TO MOTHERS.

Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup should always be used for children teething. It soothes the child, softens the gums, allays all pain, cures wind colic, and is the best remedy for diarrhœa. 25c. a bottle.—[*Adv.*]

"BROWN'S HOUSEHOLD PANACEA,"

The Great Pain Reliever,

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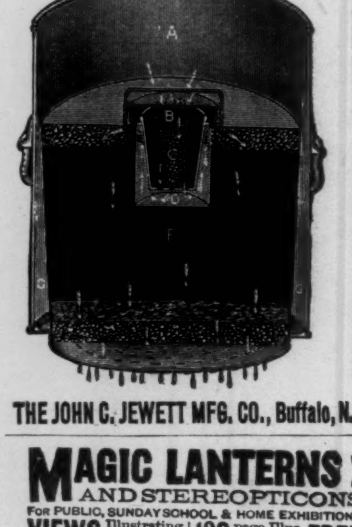

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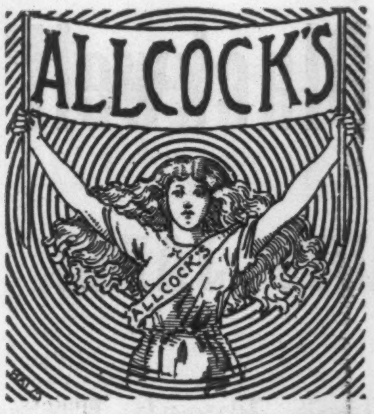

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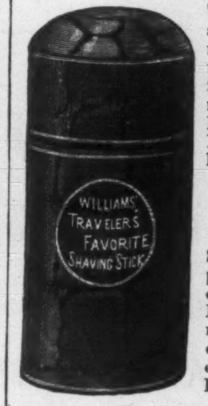

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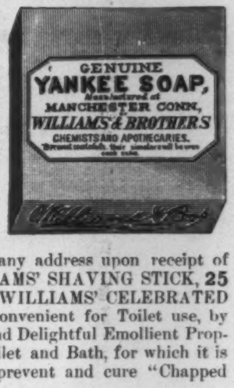

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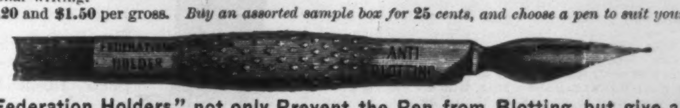

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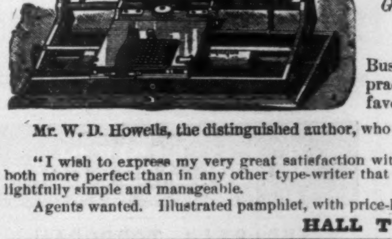

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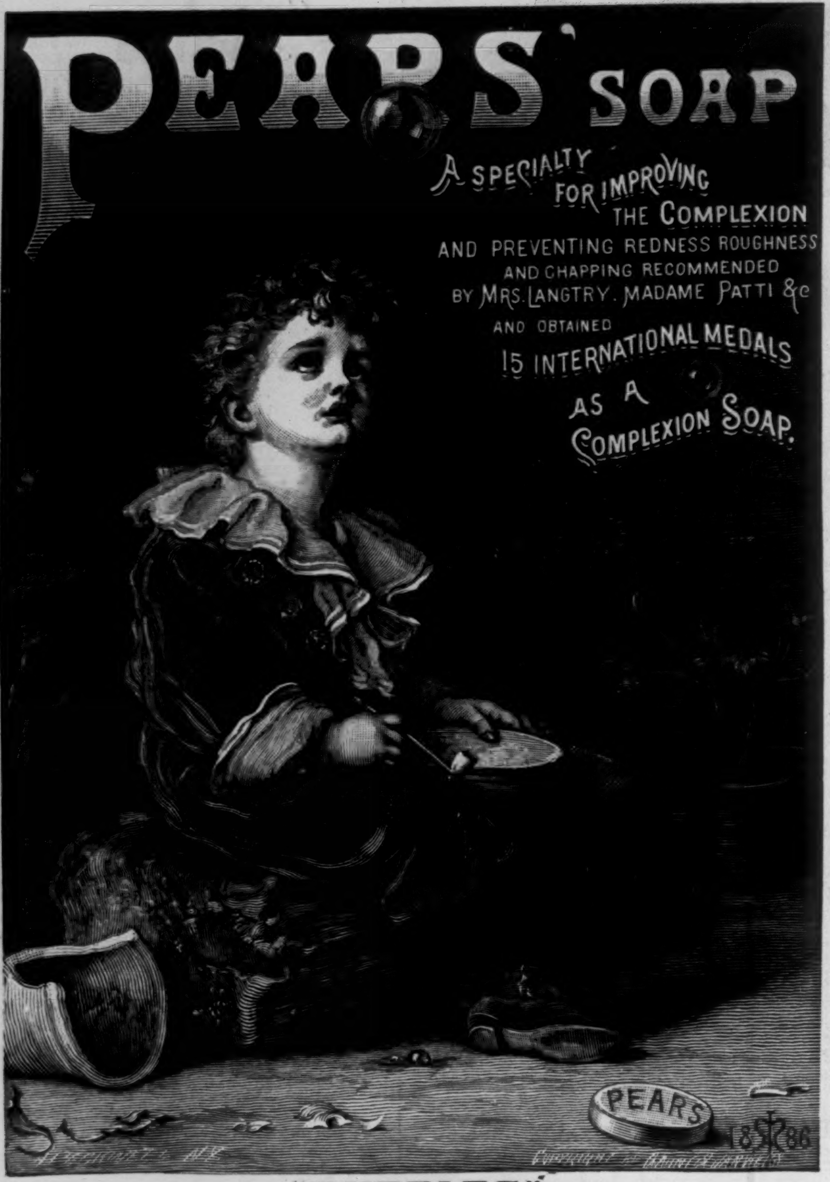

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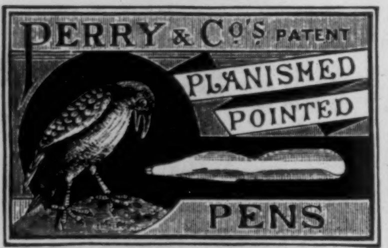

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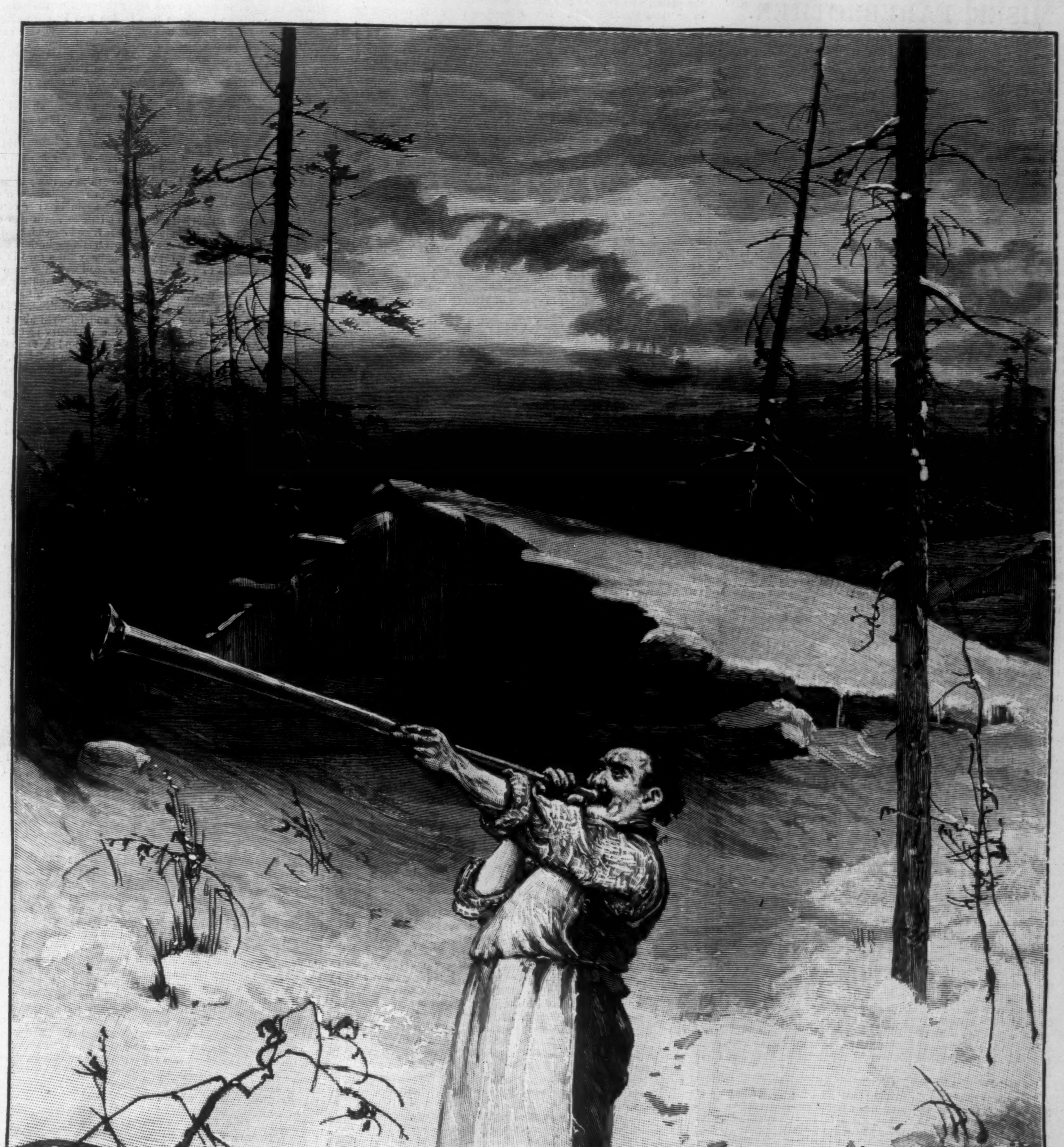

THE CALL TO DINNER IN A LOGGING CAMP.—Drawn by Barnard and Graham.—[See Page 918.]

MISER FAREBROTHER.*

By B. L. FARJEON,

Author of "Blade-o'-Grass," "Joshua Marvel," "Golden Grain," "Bread-and-Cheese and Kisses," "Grif," etc.

CHAPTER L.

DICK GARDEN TO THE RESCUE.

AUNT and Uncle Leth and their children sat in their once happy home in Camden Town gazing at each other in mute despair. For them the tragedy of life was complete and overwhelming, and their condition was such that they could find no words to give expression to their horror and grief. They were waiting for Fred Cornwall, who had obtained permission to see Phœbe in prison. When he entered the room his face was white and stern. He felt the terrible blow which had fallen upon them no less poignantly than they; but he had not lost the power to act, nor, as with them, had hope entirely deserted him.

"I have seen her," he said, in a low tone. "She sends loving messages to you. I expected to find her heart-broken and prostrate, but she is imbued with a strange strength and resignation. The worst is over, she says; she must not think of the past, but of the future. She is sustained by a consciousness of innocence, and is inexpressibly comforted by the thought that we know she is innocent. She begs that you will not grieve too deeply for her." He paused a moment or two. "That is the sense of her message to you. She is an angel and a martyr. I can trust myself to say nothing more of my visit to the prison. I must not remain with you now, unless you have something to communicate which may help me in the task upon which I am engaged—of even yet clearing her from the wicked charge. Yes, Aunt Leth, I will move heaven and earth to establish her innocence. I will not rest, I will not sleep—" Again he was compelled to pause; and when he could control himself he said: "I must see Tom Barley. Has he been here to-day?"

"Yes," replied Aunt Leth; "but I fear it will be long before he comes here again. There was a dreadful scene between him and 'Melia Jane. The girl stormed at him for giving his evidence about seeing a woman in a blue dress at Parksides on that fatal night. She said if it had not been for him our poor Phœbe would have been set free; and when he asked what else he could do but answer the questions they put to him, she answered that he ought to have cut his tongue out first."

"'Melia Jane was right," said Fanny.

"I don't see that he could have acted differently," said Fred, thoughtfully. "Without his evidence the case against my suffering angel would have been incomplete; but there can be no question that he spoke the truth. He did see a woman in a blue dress at Parksides; but it was not Phœbe. The evidence relating to the dresses worn by Mrs. Pamflett is not to be shaken, and it could not have been that she wore on that night a blue dress in order to throw suspicion upon our innocent darling."

"She could have worn such a dress," said Uncle Leth, "and afterward destroyed it."

"That is possible enough; but she could have had no hope, supposing her to be the guilty wretch—"

"Or her son," interposed Fanny.

"She could have had no hope of entangling our Phœbe by so doing. She knew that Phœbe was living here, and the sudden visit our poor girl paid to her father could not by any possibility have become known to her beforehand. If the woman Tom Barley saw was neither Phœbe nor Mrs. Pamflett, who is she? There are now two mysterious persons in this horrible affair—the man who was in the habit of visiting Miser Farebrother late at night and this woman whom Tom Barley saw, and who was conspicuously anxious that he should not see her face. These matters must be followed up; we can agitate, we can get time. I hear on all sides nothing but sympathy expressed for our dear Phœbe, and the case against her is so entirely circumstantial that I will not, I cannot, give up hope. A friend of mine who has chambers next to mine is so much interested in the case that he has offered to help me all he can. He is clearer-headed than I am just now, and cleverer, and higher up the ladder. He is convinced that Phœbe is innocent, and that there is a mystery in the affair which, unravelled, would set her free."

"God bless him!" sobbed Fanny. "What is the name of this good friend, that I may remember it in my prayers?"

"Dick Garden. We are going to work together. He is waiting for me now in my rooms. He is a good fellow—the best of friends; I rely greatly upon him. Calm as I appear, I am burning with wrath and indignation, and I am scarcely to be depended upon for a clear judicial reasoning upon anything we may happily discover. I must go at once. Then you cannot tell me where I can find Tom Barley?"

"I will find him for you," said Robert, starting up.

"Do; and send him on to my place immediately. Good-by—good-by. If you hear anything, don't fail to let me know."

He drove rapidly to his rooms, where he found his friend Richard Garden awaiting him. This friend was of about the same age as himself; an ambitious, astute young fellow, determined to get along in the world, and almost certain to succeed, for the reason that he had brains and indomitable courage and industry.

He looked up from the paper upon which he was writing when Fred entered. Upon a smaller table in the room some food was spread: a plate of ham and beef, a cold pie, and bread; also a jug of ale.

"You have had nothing to eat?" said Garden. Fred shook his head impatiently. "Of course you haven't; and you think that we can go into an affair like this with empty stomachs. No, old fellow; we must assist ourselves like sensible men. A craving stomach is a bad mental foundation. Come, tuck away; force something down. That's right. Just taste this cold pie—good, isn't it? A pint of ale between us—here's your half, no more and no less. You feel better, don't you? Now we are fit to set to work. You saw her?"

"Yes."

"Did you get her to talk calmly?"

"She was calmer than you are, Dick. She has made up her mind to die."

"Not for many a long year yet. Here's a letter I've written to the papers, signed 'A Lawyer,' showing up the weak points in the case, and appealing for sympathy and a surer kind of justice. Just finished the fourth copy as you came in. My lad is downstairs; he will take the letters to the newspaper offices, and to-morrow they will be all over the country. Don't lose heart, Fred; there is some infernal mystery at the bottom of this affair, and I mean to get at it. You asked the poor girl about the dresses Mrs. Pamflett was in the habit of wearing?"

"Yes; and she said she never saw the woman in a blue dress."

"Is she still positive about the brooch?"

"She has not the slightest doubt. When her father turned her from his house she left the brooch behind her."

"Then it must have been placed in the grounds by some person—deliberately placed there."

"Unless it was dropped by accident."

"If so, it must have been a female who dropped it. Either way, the person who dropped or placed it where it was found can be no other than Mrs. Pamflett. Let us suppose that. If dropped by accident, it proves that she must have been near the spot where the miser was murdered; if placed there by her, it must have been placed for a motive. Miss Farebrother adheres to the truth of her story as to what occurred on the night of her visit to Parksides?"

"Yes."

"She did not see Mrs. Pamflett?"

"No."

"But Mrs. Pamflett may have seen her. Let us assume that she or her son committed the deed. She sees Miss Farebrother in the grounds, and overhears, perhaps, what passes between the poor young lady and her father. She witnesses Miss Farebrother's departure from Parksides. After that the murder is committed. Then, seeing Miss Farebrother's veil on the ground—in Miss Farebrother's condition there are a thousand reasonable hypotheses to account for its having become detached from her hat—the idea presents itself to Mrs. Pamflett to strengthen the case against Miss Farebrother by placing the brooch also near the dead body."

"You do not forget the female in a blue dress that Tom Barley saw in the grounds?"

"I do not; and I cannot account for it. Did you ask Miss Farebrother anything about the man who, according to Mrs. Pamflett, had been in the habit for years of visiting Miser Farebrother secretly at night?"

"To her knowledge, no such man ever presented himself and no such visits ever took place."

"She has no remembrance of anything of the kind occurring?"

"Not the slightest."

"It is inexplicable. There's some one at the door. Come in!"

It was Robert Lethbridge, who came to say that Tom Barley was on duty, and would not be able to visit Fred Cornwall before the morning; but if they wished to speak to him at once they would find him on his beat.

"No," said Garden; "we will not go to him. I want him when his time is his own, so that we can talk quietly and uninterruptedly. Go and tell him to come and see us at nine o'clock in the morning."

"He can be here earlier, Dick," said Fred Cornwall.

"Nine o'clock is early enough. It will give us time to sleep and rest. I am physician as well as lawyer in this case it seems."

Robert Lethbridge departed with the message, and he was barely gone before two other visitors presented themselves. These were Kiss, the comedian, and Mr. Linton, the dramatic author. They looked very grave as they entered. Fred Cornwall introduced them to Richard Garden, who cast a shrewd glance at them, and said, quietly:

"You have something to tell us?"

"You can speak freely," said Fred. "Mr. Garden and I are working together in this terrible matter."

"A terrible matter indeed, Mr. Cornwall," said Kiss, with deep feeling in his voice, "and Mr. Linton and I are responsible for it." The young lawyers looked at their visitors in surprise at this statement. Kiss continued: "It is the melancholy truth that if it had not been for us an innocent young girl, an angel of sweetness and purity, would not be lying at death's door as we stand here. Unless we can prove her innocence it will haunt us to our dying day."

"Why do you accuse yourselves?" asked Garden.

"Was it not through our folly that Mr. Lethbridge was plunged into difficulties? Believing that my friend Linton had written a play which would make all our fortunes, did we not go to Mr. Lethbridge and by our plausible statements induce him to sign a bill for three hundred pounds which that infamous scoundrel, Jeremiah Pamflett, discounted? You will remember the play I refer to, Mr. Garden; it was *A Heart of Gold*, which, because of an extraordinary first-night speech made by Mr. Linton, blazed up for a fortnight or so, and then spluttered out like a tallow candle with a damp wick. It was in the hope of helping her uncle out of his difficulties—for which we, and we alone, were responsible—that Miss Farebrother paid a visit to her father on the night he was murdered. Had she not gone he would have been murdered all the same—there is no doubt in our minds as to that—and, safe and happy at home with her aunt and uncle, by no possibility could suspicion have been cast upon her. But she *did* go, because none of us were able to pay the money which Mr. Lethbridge borrowed for us. Do you see now how it is that we are responsible for what has occurred? It is Linton and I who ought to have been placed in the dock instead of that sweet, unfortunate young lady. Since the lying accusation was brought against her, we have not been able to sleep. If exhausted nature compels us to go off in a doze we start up in affright and horror. There will never again be rest for either of us until Miss Farebrother is set at liberty and her honorable name restored to her."

"Your feelings do you credit," said Garden; "but it is not alone to say what you have said that you have come here to-night?"

"No; but it leads up to what may be of importance. God knows whether it will or not, but drowning men catch at a straw. I am glad you are working with Mr. Cornwall, sir; it is easy to see how he is suffering, and you must be a comfort to him—if," he added, feelingly, "anybody *can* comfort him at such a time as this. Well, sir, Linton and I have also been putting our heads together, and we decided to set a watch."

"Upon whom?"

"Upon that image of wickedness Jeremiah Pamflett and his equally wicked mother. Sir, that tale of hers as to what took place between her and Miss Farebrother on the night of the murder is false as— Never mind; it will not do to be profane."

"That is to say, you believe it to be false? You have no direct evidence to the contrary?"

"No, sir; unfortunately we have not. It is our belief, as you say, but none the less incontrovertible. It is not because we have dramatic ideas that we determined to watch this precious pair. It seemed to us to offer a chance of discovering something; therefore we set practically to work, Linton watching the son, I watching the mother. Until this evening we saw nothing that could be turned against them. You are probably aware that Mrs. Pamflett left Parksides shortly after the murder?"

"She had to leave," remarked Fred; "as Miss Farebrother's legal representative I saw to that before the trial took place."

"Quite proper. And her son had to leave the London office and seek lodgings elsewhere?"

"Yes; that was also effected through me."

"Being thrown upon their own resources, they took two rooms in Knightsbridge. We tracked them there. Sometimes they went out together, sometimes alone. When they were together they scarcely spoke to each other, and it seemed to us as if this silence had been determined upon between them: what they said might have been overheard, and they might have said something injudicious. It almost appeared as if nothing was to come of our watch. There was a monotony in it which weighed upon us, and we were almost in despair. We tried to get a room in the house they lodged in, but there was none to let. The day before yesterday, however, something occurred to rouse us. We saw a woman watching the house they lived in. She knocked at the street door, and received an answer to her questions from the landlady. Then she retired, and from a short distance kept watch upon the house—you may imagine how excited this made us—until Jeremiah Pamflett came out alone. He walked along apparently with no suspicion in his mind that he was being followed by the woman, and certainly with no suspicion that Linton and I were walking behind them both. You may be certain that we were very careful. It is excusable in me as an actor, and in Linton as a dramatic author, that we should adopt some slight disguise, altered from day to day under my direction, to lessen the chances of our being detected in case Jeremiah Pamflett should happen to see us. Well, sir, as the four of us were walking along in Indian file, what did the woman suddenly do but go up to Jeremiah and accost him! And what did he do but start violently, turn round to look at the woman, and then, without saying one word to her, walk rapidly away with the conspicuous intention of getting rid of her. From a rapid walk he got into a run, and the woman and we lost sight of him. So far as that incident was concerned, there was an end of it. We lost sight too of the woman; but not before we saw sufficient of her to be able to recognize her if we should see her again. Yesterday we were again in view of the house in which these Pamfletts lodged, and there again was the same woman watching, as we judged, for her friend Jeremiah. But he did not make his appearance, and after remaining in the neighborhood for nearly an hour, we saw the landlady put a card in her front window, 'Rooms to let.' Across the road went the woman; she knocked at the door, made some inquiries of the landlady, and came away with a spiteful, disappointed expression on her face. I told Linton to follow her, and find out where she lived. Meanwhile I myself went across to the house, and inquired about the rooms to let. It was as I suspected: the Pamfletts had left—'quite sudden,' the landlady said. Putting this and that together, I came to the conclusion that they had left their lodgings, and most probably the neighborhood, because of the discovery by the woman of their whereabouts. This looked so much like fright on the part of Jeremiah Pamflett that it stirred me up, and made me hopeful. But where had he and his mother flown to? Sir, this very evening chance has befriended us, and we are again on the track. Give me, if you please, your closest attention: I am approaching something rather startling."

"Stop a moment," said Garden, rising and going to the sideboard, from which he took a bottle of apollinaris and a bottle of brandy, "you seem rather faint."

"To tell you the truth," said Kiss, "I have scarcely tasted food to-day, I have been that anxious and distressed."

"We are all engaged in the same good cause," said Garden, smiling, "and every one, with the exception of myself, seems bent upon starving himself. Take a slice of this pie; Mr. Linton will join you. You don't object to brandy and apollinaris?"

"Not at all," said Kiss, speaking with his mouth full; "split it between Linton and me. Mr. Garden, you are a wise gentleman and a capable chief. If we are happily successful in the end we have in view—and I pray God we shall be!—we shall have you to thank for it. Do you not think with me, Mr. Cornwall?"

Fred pressed Garden's hand with emotion, and Garden, shrewd, cool, self-possessed, and with all his wits about him, returned the pressure, and gave Fred a look of encouragement. It was like wine to Fred. His hopes grew stronger. Perhaps, after all, his dear, suffering girl would, by the mercy of God, be rescued from her dread peril, and be spared to brighten his life and the lives of those who held her dear. His eyes grew dim, and he pressed his hand across them.

"Do not overrate my services," said Garden, in his clear strong voice. "I am only a moderately skilful engineer, and my hardest task, it appears to me, is to keep the machinery of which I have direction in fair workable order. Now, then, Mr. Kiss, you look double the man you were. We are all attention."

CHAPTER LI.

THE DIAMOND BRACELET AGAIN.

"MR. LINTON," continued Kiss, "followed the woman who was so anxious to enter into relations—evidently not new ones—with that abominable scoundrel Jeremiah Pamflett, and who had exhibited such vexation at his sudden disappearance; he learnt her address, but could not discover her name. Inquiring of people who lived in the same house, he was informed by some that they knew nothing whatever of her, and was told by others to mind his own business. But, as I said, chance befriended us: not two hours ago we saw the woman and Jeremiah together. We had failed in tracking him down; she had succeeded. And of all the corners in this Babylon where should Jeremiah have taken up his new lodgings but in South Lambeth, three doors from the house in which Linton lives! That is not the only piece of luck which chance has thrown in our way. The landlady of the house in which he rents rooms is a friend of Mrs. Linton. This good lady, who is as deeply concerned in the terrible course of events as we are, is now in that house—on the watch. Jeremiah Pamflett and his mother will not escape us again so easily. So much for the side issue—what I may call the under-plot. Now for the important discovery. When we saw Jeremiah and the woman together, he looking very much disturbed and she very determined and vicious, I desired Linton to keep in the background. Without flattery, I may say I am a better actor than he is, and, besides, I was more completely disguised. My object was to discover what these two were talking about. So I followed them close enough to hear scraps of their conversation, but not close enough to draw suspicious observation upon myself. The first thing I heard that caused me surprise was a name—Captain Ablewhite. It was the woman who gave utterance to it, and accompanying her mention of the name were some words by no means complimentary to its owner. 'He's a damned scoundrel,' said the woman to Jeremiah, as I casually passed them, 'and you're another!' Now a high-minded, honest man would have fired up at this. Jeremiah Pamflett did not; he was as meek as a turnip. They passed on out of hearing; but I did not lose sight of them. 'Captain Ablewhite!' thought I, 'Captain Ablewhite! How is it that the name seems so familiar to me?' Does it sound familiar to you, sir?"

"In a vague way, yes," replied Garden; "but I cannot immediately place it. I am not personally acquainted with any one of that name."

"Nor I, sir; but that did not prevent it bothering me. I took another favorable opportunity of getting close to the woman and Jeremiah. She was talking away at a rapid rate, he saying hardly a word; but I happened to catch a wicked look in his eyes once as he looked down on her. It was more than wicked, it was devilish; and I could not help thinking that it was a good job they were not walking in a dark place with no people about. If ever murder was expressed in a man's face, it was expressed in the face of Jeremiah Pamflett as he cast that look at his companion. 'Half the money you and Ablewhite got for the diamond bracelet'—don't miss a word of this, sir; I am repeating what the woman said to Jeremiah—'was to come to my share, and a few sovereigns is all I have managed to screw out of him. The false villain has thrown me over for another woman, and has given me the slip; but I'll take care that you don't serve me the same. I have found out your new quarters—you live at No. 12 Surrey Street.' That, sir, is three doors from Linton's lodgings—he lives at No. 15. You will understand that it would have been the height of imprudence for me to have remained near this precious pair for more than a few moments at a time, but what I had already heard opened my

* Begun in Harper's Weekly No. 1593.

eyes. It came upon me like a flash of lightning. Captain Ablewhite and a diamond bracelet! Why, that story was in all the papers a little while ago, and created a regular stir. Linton is making use of it now in a new drama he is writing. Real life, sir; facts with which the public is familiar—that's the sort of thing for the stage. You remember the story, of course?"

"I remember it well," said Garden, cool and collected as ever. "Go on, Mr. Kiss; something may come of this."

"Something *will* come of it, sir," said Kiss, his voice growing more excited. "You haven't got the essence of what I heard; I shall astonish you presently. You remember what a laugh there was when Mr. Quinlan's statement was published in the papers. Mr. Quinlan was the husband of the lady from whom the diamond bracelet had been stolen, and the information he gave to the police and the reporters was that the bracelet that had been stolen was one he had had made in imitation of the genuine article, and that the stones the thieves had got hold of were false. 'The Biters Bit'—that was the heading in the newspapers."

"I remember it all perfectly."

"Listen now to what I learnt from the stray bits of conversation I picked up as I followed Jeremiah and the woman. She was Mrs. Quinlan's maid; the man waiting outside the Langham Hotel was Jeremiah Pamflett. She gave him the bracelet. Afterward he met Captain Ablewhite, but what passed between them, of course, cannot be known. The woman knows, however, that the bracelet was taken to Miser Farebrother, and that it was he who advanced money on it, Jeremiah being the go-between. I did not hear all this as I am relating it, but I put it together out of what I managed to pick up, and I will stake my life that it is near enough to the truth for us or any one to work upon. That, however, does not bring down the curtain; you have yet to hear the climax. Linton could not have worked it up more dramatically. The last words that reached my ears were these: 'You fool!' said the woman to Jeremiah. 'The bracelet you received from me was the genuine one. The stones were real, and are worth forty thousand pounds, and I mean to have my share of the plunder.' The moment she said this, Jeremiah, in a kind of frenzy, clapped his hand on her mouth and dragged her away. A cab was passing, and he hailed it, and hustled the woman in, giving some directions to the driver. The next moment they were gone. If there had been another cab in view I would have followed them, but unfortunately there wasn't one in the street. The first thing I did after that was to run with Linton to his lodgings, and the first thing Mrs. Linton said to us was that Mrs. Pamflett and her son had taken the two rooms that had been to let at No. 12. 'Are you acquainted with the landlady?' I asked, and Mrs. Linton answered that she and the landlady of No. 12 were friends. 'Go and bring her here at once,' I said; and no sooner said than done. It took but a few minutes to get the landlady on our side; it was Mrs. Linton who did that. It would not have been safe for me or Linton to go to No. 12 to watch; Jeremiah Pamflett knows us, and at close quarters might see through any disguise we might assume; but neither he nor Mrs. Pamflett has ever seen Mrs. Linton, so we appointed her our sentinel. The next best thing we thought we could do was to come straight here and make Mr. Cornwall acquainted with our discovery. The question is, what is to be done? We might go to the police—"

Garden held up his hand, and Kiss did not finish the sentence.

"That would be the worst thing we could do," he said. "What you have discovered must at present be mentioned to no other person but ourselves. The task upon which we are engaged is that of saving an innocent young lady's life; all else is of small importance. How was the woman dressed?"

"Very quietly in black."

"Does she resemble Miss Farebrother in build?"

"Not at all. She is shorter and stouter."

"Did you hear anything definite as to the length of time she has been in London?"

"Nothing; but judging in a general way, I should say she has only recently returned from foreign parts with the idea of obtaining from Jeremiah Pamflett a share of the proceeds of the robbery."

"A share of the money he received from Miser Farebrother for the bracelet that was stolen? Yes, that is a natural conclusion." The young lawyer rose from his seat and went to a corner of the room where a great pile of newspapers lay. "Mr. Cornwall keeps a file of the *Times* for reference; it will help us." He searched through the papers, and soon found the one he wanted. He smiled quietly as he looked down the columns. "It is as I suspected. The account of the robbery of the diamond bracelet was first published on the day preceding that upon which Miser Farebrother was murdered." They all started at this. And the young lawyer proceeded: "Let us build up a theory. Jeremiah Pamflett takes a diamond bracelet of great value to his master, and upon the strength of his representations Miser Farebrother advances a sum of money upon it—believing the stones to be genuine. On the day before his death a newspaper falls into his hands, and he learns from it that he has been tricked—that the bracelet has been stolen, and that the diamonds are false. We know that the one passion of his life is money—it is his idol, his god. We have it in evidence that on that day, in the afternoon, doubtless after he made this discovery, he sent a telegram to Jeremiah Pamflett in London, requesting his manager's attendance at Parksides. Miser Farebrother was not in the habit of wasting money upon telegrams; hence his sending of this message was prompted by some particular motive—say the demand from Jeremiah Pamflett for the restitution of the money of which he has been defrauded. Before this scoundrel leaves London for Parksides he also has learnt that a trick has been played upon him by Captain Ablewhite and the woman who has tracked him down. At Parksides a stormy scene takes place between the miser and his scoundrel manager. The miser threatens criminal proceedings, but perhaps gives the scoundrel time to refund the money he has advanced. They part with feelings of bitter rage toward each other. What course is now open to Jeremiah Pamflett? Has he the money to refund? Unlikely. Can he borrow it? Quite as unlikely. I bear in mind what I gathered from you, Fred, respecting the bill for three hundred pounds which Mr. Lethbridge accepted. You arranged for the payment of that bill with a betting man, who had received it from Jeremiah Pamflett. Natural inference: that the scoundrel Jeremiah had been backing horses and losing. If necessary, we will look that betting man up. Not seeing his way to refund the money which has been advanced on the bracelet, nothing but exposure and disgrace lies before Jeremiah Pamflett. How to avoid impending ruin? How to avoid a felon's fate? Miser Farebrother lives practically alone in the house at Parksides, waited upon by the house-keeper, Jeremiah's mother. These two are bound to each other by mutual interests. Who so likely to profit by Miser Farebrother's death as Jeremiah Pamflett? Unhappily, on that night Miss Farebrother goes down to Parksides on her heavenly mission of love. But before she makes her appearance there the murder of her father is resolved upon. There is no independent evidence that Jeremiah returned to London and reached his office by eleven o'clock. We have only his word for it. Had Miss Farebrother not visited Parksides on that night, suspicion would have fallen upon the Pamfletts, and the hour of the scoundrel's return to London would have been a vital point. I put aside the account given by Mrs. Pamflett of the visit of a strange man to Miser Farebrother. It may or may not be true. Equally it may or may not be a concocted story, invented beforehand for safety. Here comes in Tom Barley's evidence as to his seeing in the grounds a female in a blue dress. The honest fellow spoke the truth; he saw what he was compelled to swear to. Miss Farebrother wore such a dress. But why should she avoid him? He was her tried and faithful friend. Convinced as we are of her innocence, there is no reason for her avoidance. Here lies the mystery; if we can solve it, Miss Farebrother is safe. And solve it we will— My God!"

They had listened to him in profound admiration. Entranced by his masterly analysis, it seemed to Fred as if they had only to go to the prison in which Phœbe was immured and demand her release. But when he uttered the words "My God!" and started to his feet and paced the room in a state of excitement, which, for a few moments was uncontrollable, their feelings of admiration changed to astonishment, and they gazed at him in amazement.

"What is it, Dick?" cried Fred—"what is it?"

He seized Garden's hands, and would have held him still; but Garden threw him off, and continued to pace the room.

"Don't speak to me for a moment!" he cried. "What I have suddenly thought of is so wild that I cannot reveal it. But if it is a true inspiration, it means salvation. Ask me nothing, for I shall not answer you. It is for you to answer me. It has occurred to me that Mrs. Pamflett and Mrs. Lethbridge are about the same height and figure."

"Good God!" cried Fred. "What do you mean?"

"Answer my question, Fred," said Garden, "as you value Miss Farebrother's life. The women—one a devil, the other an angel—are about the same height and figure?"

"Yes, they are."

"And from a short distance—say thirty or forty yards—might possibly be mistaken for each other?"

"Yes, it is possible."

"Thank you." He had succeeded in mastering his agitation, and now to all appearance was calm. "Meanwhile," he said, sitting at the table and beginning to write, "what has become of the diamond bracelet?"

The question was uttered in a musing tone, as though he were asking it of himself. He continued to write for four or five minutes, and having completed his task, he read what he had written, folded the paper, and put it in his pocket. Then he turned to Kiss and Mr. Linton.

"You have nothing more to say?"

"Nothing."

"You delight in dramatic surprises," he said, addressing Linton, with a radiant look.

"If they are new to the stage," replied the bewildered dramatic author, "they are invaluable."

"I may supply you with one. It is just on the cards." He now addressed Kiss as well as Mr. Linton. "Our interview is at an end. What I wish you to do is to so arrange matters that we can at any moment lay hands upon Mrs. Pamflett, her son, and the woman who is implicated in the theft of the diamond bracelet. Do you think you can manage it?"

"I will answer for that."

"When you came here to-night," he said, earnestly, "you reproached yourself for being the cause of an innocent girl being sentenced to death for a murder she did not commit. You went back, as it were, to first causes. It is likely—almost certain, indeed, so much depends upon chance—that if you had not come, the inspiration which may mean salvation would not have descended upon me. To you, therefore, if all ends as I fervently pray it may, will belong the credit of directing justice aright. Humanly administered, it is sometimes fallible."

"Mr. Garden," said Kiss, "in a voice no less earnest than that of the young lawyer, "I have not the slightest idea of your meaning, but you have won my esteem, and I honor you with all my heart and soul."

"I thank you," said the young lawyer, with dignity and courtesy; "what you kindly accord to me is worth the winning. Good-night."

When Kiss and Mr. Linton were gone, Garden said to Fred: "I am deeply, truly in earnest. For a little while leave the direction of this affair entirely in my hands. Give me your promise."

"I give it, Dick, old fellow, cheerfully."

"I am going now to the office of a newspaper, the editor of which I am acquainted with. I shall take a cab there and back. Unless some urgent necessity arises, do not leave the rooms till I return."

The following morning, in the columns of one daily London newspaper, the following interesting item found a place:

"Our readers will remember the incident of the abstraction of a wonderful diamond bracelet from the jewel-case of a lady of fabulous wealth. This bracelet was valued at sixty thousand pounds. A singular and somewhat humorous turn was given to this robbery by the wealthy husband of the owner, who, when public attention was directed to the matter, stated that the ornament stolen was one he had had made in exact imitation of the original, and that the stones of which the thieves had obtained possession were false. Information has reached us that this was not the case, and that the missing bracelet is the genuine one. If this be true, the daring robbers made a rare haul, of which, as nothing whatever has been heard of them, they have by this time reaped the advantage. The task of disposing of these diamonds singly in the markets of the world could not have been very difficult, their identification being almost impossible. In the interests of justice it is to be regretted that the truth was not made public in the first instance; it is now, supposing the thieves to have been moderately prudent, too late to repair the error."

This paragraph was copied in subsequent editions of hundreds of London and provincial newspapers.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A STUDY IN SHORT-HAND.

Letter from Bleecker Van Vechten to John Schuyler.

HUCKLEBERRY HILL, NEW HAMPSHIRE, *July 20th.*

DEAR SCHUYLER,—Fancy a hill so steep as to be almost a bluff, rising fourteen hundred feet above the valley at its foot, its height crowned with a growth of trees and underbrush, picturesque though somewhat scraggy, as the mountain has several times been burned over to secure the growth of huckleberries, from which it takes its name.

Directly on the brow of the cliff stands the "Hackmatack," which has grown from farm-house to boarding-house, and from boarding-house to hotel, under the thrifty management of its proprietor.

This landlord is a world removed from the typical Boniface of old. No genial toddy circles round his hearth on cold evenings; no cooling cobbler rattles along his piazza on warm ones. The whole establishment recalls the Californian's description of Boston as a place where respectability stalked unchecked.

I daily curse the accident which sent me up to this dull hole, with my arm in a sling, to get through the vacation as best I may. If I could only work on my lectures I should be comparatively contented, but though my brain is preternaturally active, and throws off ideas faster than Vesuvius emits lava or a pin-wheel sparks, *cui bono?* I have no means of recording them, for my left hand, as you see, is utterly untrained in the service of the brain, and only serves to scrawl a page or two of correspondence. Why are not boys trained to be ambidextrous?

But to the business of this letter. Could you not find me a stenographer in New York? I could save the price of him twice over in the value of the thoughts which are now escaping me at the rate of five dollars an hour, and I could find board for him "up the road a piece," as they say here in Yankeedom.

Adieu, old chum,

BLEECKER VAN VECHTEN.

UNIVERSITY CLUB, *July 22d.*

DEAR VAN,—Bother your lectures! You know very well that when we picked you up after that railroad accident we had to work over you for hours to bring you to life at all, and that your whole nervous system was shattered. The doctors sent you off for mental as much as physical rest, and you came mighty near finding your way to a much duller spot than Huckleberry Hill.

As for your ideas being so valuable, don't distress yourself. It is an illusion. I have often had the same sensation at night when I could not sleep, and such brilliant ideas chased each other through my brain that I felt sure I was either inspired or unconsciously plagiarizing from the great authors; but when I came to write them down the next morning they looked wonderfully tame. Depend upon it, you would have the same experience. "Rest, perturbed spirit—rest!" Study human nature in your fellow-boarders. Fall in love, if possible, with some pretty girl. Flirt with her, at all events; nothing rests the mind like flirtation.

I don't know of any good stenographer. The one we employ in our law office is a girl, and she is too timid to be very satisfactory—starts and colors whenever she is spoken to—and, moreover, is not very rapid; but we keep her partly because her mother is a widow and an invalid, and the daughter supports her. Moreover, she is a lady, and a striking contrast to the majority of her kind who haunt the down-town offices in "ruffs and puffs and farthingales and things," and who invariably put me in mind of those lines in "In Memoriam":

> "So careless of the type she seems,
> So careful of the single man."

Good-by; I'm off on the three o'clock boat for Staten Island.

Yours ever, JOHN SCHUYLER.

Telegram from B. Van V. to J. S.

Must have stenographer. Would yours come, with her mother?

Telegram from J. S. to B. Van V.

Miss Lord and her mother start to-morrow.

HUCKLEBERRY HILL, *August* 1.

DEAR JACK,—Your little stenographer and her mother arrived last night, and I walked up to the farm this morning to make their acquaintance. I found them seated in the porch, helping Mrs. Barr, the farmer's wife, to shell pease. Mrs. Lord has a sweet face, and looks like Whistler's portrait of his mother in the Academy exhibition last winter. The daughter is as timid as you described her, and seems rather sentimental. I hope she will not fall in love with young Barr, who officiates, when off duty on the farm, as factotum at the "Hackmatack."

I wish you could have found a man, but I will try to be grateful for small favors.

I have been trying to follow your advice as to studying my fellow-boarders, but one might as well study the variety of bricks in a wall. As Schopenhauer amiably remarked of his neighbors, they are just what they seem, and that is the worst that can be said of them. A summer hotel is enough to convert any man to pessimism. My hand aches from its unwonted toil. Will write more to-morrow.

August 2d.

Life begins to seem tolerable to me once more, now that I can work. I sit on the corner piazza, with the misty gray hills gladdening my eyes in the background, and Miss Lucy—her name is Lucy; did you know it?—in her soft Quaker drab dress almost melting into the landscape as she sits before me writing. She takes down as much copy as I am prepared to dictate, and then retires with her type-writer to her studio—a great vine-shaded rock below the piazza, where she is completely sheltered from observation, and yet can hear all that goes on above. I fancy she has seen very little of the world, she seems so entertained with the dull gayety here. I wonder if she knows how much better-looking she is than the girls here in their mussy finery? I like her smooth hair and snowy linen bands, and though she is not pretty, there is something soothing and agreeable in her personality.

It is curious, but I find that I can dictate more fluently than I could ever write. There is something about an amanuensis that stimulates the mind.

Why can you not run away from New York for a week or two, and come up here to rusticate? There is a Miss Reynolds here, to whom I am devoting myself, but I don't find it as restful as you promised. I think I must have forgotten the art of love-making. Come up and teach me. I have paved the way for you by representing you as a woman-hater; so you will have a smooth course, for there is no character so dear to the feminine heart.

Yours, VAN.

August 15th.

DEAR SCHUYLER,—Even the gods cannot help those who neglect their opportunities. Here have I selected an inamorata for you, and even gone so far as to make love to her in a vague way for your benefit, to get her mind into a sentimental and, as the spiritualists would say, sensitized condition, and now you won't come. "When I said you would live to be married I did not think you would die a bachelor," but this is my last effort on your behalf.

I am coming on finely with my lectures, and Miss Lord does very well—for a woman. I begin, by-the-way, to think that we may have overrated her timidity, or at least that the velvet paws may hide sharp claws. This morning when I came out from breakfast I found her awaiting me. Seeing a frown on my face, she asked in her soft un-American voice, with the respectful third person she always uses, "Is the professor tired this morning?" "No, Miss Lucy," I replied, "not tired, but, like the intoxicated individual, 'awfully discouraged.' There was nothing fit to eat at breakfast; the steak was overdone, the eggs were underdone, and the serving was not done at all, which is a clear case of what your late legal employer would call 'misfeasance, malefeasance, and non-feasance combined.'" It was a comfort to blurt out my unvarnished mind to some one, after all the aping civilities of the parlor. "I am very sorry," came the sympathetic response. "Is the professor ready to continue his lecture on the 'Evolution of Spirituality'?" Detecting a ring as of suppressed amusement in her tone, I looked swiftly and searchingly at her; but her eyes were cast demurely down, and her pencil already on the paper. Depend upon it, she is not so simple-hearted as she seems. It would not be pleasant to have a stenographer secretly making fun of one's lectures. My arm aches, and I am out of tune with the world. "Man delights not me, nor woman neither," though by the smiling of your last letter you seem to say so. More anon.

(*Continued on page 930.*)

GREAT EXPECTATIONS—

—Drawn by F. S. Church.

A STUDY IN SHORT-HAND.

(*Continued from page 927.*)

August 20th.

Well, to continue, the weather to-day being like new wine, or the nearest approach to it that we get in this thirsty land, I thought I would give my legs an unwonted treat by taking them to walk. I decided to stroll up to the farm to see how the Lords were domesticating themselves at the old gray house. It has been understood that Miss Lucy should work in the mornings and have her afternoons free, and I amused myself, as I walked, picturing her seated on the door-step under the apple-tree with crocheting or some staid womanly work in her hands, over which she would be bending her quiet little head.

My musing was suddenly interrupted by a sound behind the high hedge of rough bushes which separates the farm along its whole length from the high-road which runs beside it. The sound was a peal of high-pitched girlish laughter vibrating between terror and mirth. Why is it that men, and even little boys, never squeal? It is only girls who indulge in that most undignified of all vocal expressions. Alternating with this feminine high C came a reassuring masculine bass.

Stimulated by curiosity, I parted the bushes, and looking through, saw a great lumbering cart-horse decked out like a prize ox with boughs of sumach and great tufts of golden-rod. Behind him, with one hand on the horse-rake which he was drawing, stood Seth Barr, while perched on the seat—could I believe my eyes!—was our demure stenographer, her smooth hair jolted down over her shoulders, and her head thrown back in a fit of wild hilarity. I turned on my heel and walked back to the hotel, for I had no mind to interrupt a scene of rustic courtship. I presume Miss Lord will be installed by autumn as mistress of the farm, and you will have to look out for a new type-writer; and yet I can hardly imagine her the wife of Seth Barr.

In the evening, after a late tea, half a dozen of us strolled up to the Ledge, and lounged about on the rocks watching the sunset. The valley beneath us was bathed in silvery mist, while far away on the horizon the White Hills stood out like a throne hung with purple pomp.

As the twilight deepened, Nora Reynolds took up her guitar, throwing the yellow ribbon over her shoulder, where it gleamed like a gold fillet between the whiteness of her dress and the blackness of her low-coiled Spanish hair. She has just returned from Cuba, where she has some relatives, and I believe a possible inheritance of estates. There she has picked up a collection of charming little Spanish songs, which sound like lost children crying for home, and end at last with a rising note, as if with a final pleading petition. From these she drifted on to cradle songs, which suit her low full voice admirably. If she would always sing and never talk, I should be desperately in love with her. As it is, I prefer to see her at some other man's fireside—yours, for instance. At last she touched the strings of the guitar in a single vibrating chord, and began to sing without accompaniment a little Italian folk-song which she tells me is very common all along the Bay of Naples. You heard it there, no doubt, and remember both air and words. I only recall the refrain, which swept out over the hills like a prayer, "Santa Lucia! Santa Lucia!"

It is amazing to see how little feeling for music there is in a crowd of average young people. No sooner had the last pathetic notes died away than some feather-headed fool called for "The Owl and the Pussy Cat." I knew this was the beginning of the whole repertory of college trash, so I unceremoniously picked up my hat, and marched home alone under the moon. Half unconsciously, as I walked, I hummed over to myself "Santa Lucia! Santa Lucia!" and I fancied Lucy Lord with a halo might look like Carlo Dolci's Cecilia in profile. Then the scene of the afternoon rushed upon my mind, and I laughed so loud that I startled up a whirring of surprised birds from the branches above me. Fancy a saint on a horse-rake attended by a worshipper in blue overalls! Adieu. VAN.

HUCKLEBERRY HILL, *August 25th.*

DEAR JACK,—I am in love. I dare say the announcement will not be as great a surprise to you as it was to myself, when, after walking up and down for hours in the moonlit silence of my bedroom, I stopped before the mirror to talk it out with my shadow. I told myself all that you, my sage worldly mentor, would probably tell me if you were here: that my income was snug for one, which means cramped for two; that my family would grow exceedingly frosty over a *mésalliance* (commend me to old Dutch blood for a serene sense of superiority to all the other sons and especially daughters of Adam); that Lucy is unsophisticated, and not strikingly pretty—I remember I even thought her plain when I first saw her. All these arguments I addressed to my shadow in the glass, and the sole answer was, "But I love her!"

Moreover, she is quick and docile, and a few months of coaching would bring her up to the Manhattan standard of worldliness. Of course she is entirely a lady now, only with that indescribable suspicion of unaccustomedness which would make my mother cringe.

I could wish that she had not been a stenographer. There is a publicity about the occupation which is not exactly pleasant in connection with one's wife. None of the Van Vechtens has ever been eccentric, and I confess I have always been conservative myself, and particularly in regard to woman's sphere.

I like a rich, pretty, aristocratic girl, high bred and well chaperoned, ignorant of the great world, but well up in the small world. Now Lucy is none of these, and yet I love her.

Yours, in perturbation of spirits,

BLEECKER VAN VECHTEN.

August 30th.

DEAR JACK,—It will be a great comfort to pour out a long story into your sympathetic ear, partly because I want your advice, but more because I want to go over it myself less chaotically than as it has been tumbling about in my mind. Listen, then.

Yesterday morning Lucy was writing out her task as usual under the piazza, when, coming to a passage which she could not decipher, she called to me to come down and help her. I vaulted the railing and stood at her side, studying the manuscript to discover whether the connection called for "Romans" or "remains," when my ear was caught by the sound of my own name uttered in the tones of Nora Reynolds. "Yes," she went on, "I suppose he is clever; but he is an awful prig, and a flirt besides. You needn't tell me that his sessions with that little type-writer are altogether business affairs; and as no one ever dreamed of one of the Van Vechtens marrying out of what they call their circle, I call it a shabby performance."

Her companion replied with some chaff about her disinterested concern for the girl. I heard it only vaguely, for my eyes were steadfastly fixed on Lucy's face. The color which of late has begun to flicker over her pale cheek like a rosy cloud rushed up now in a deluge of red to her very hair.

The girls above had passed on, racket in hand, to the tennis-court.

"Come," I whispered, and seizing Lucy's hand, I fairly dragged her down to the path, and never stopped till we had reached the overhanging rocks from which we watched the sunset the other night. I must have been rough, for I noticed that she was out of breath, and her wrist was red from my grasp, but my mind was too full to heed it. Well, I spoke; blunderingly, no doubt, but I told her that I loved her, and I asked her to be my wife.

When she raised her head the blush was quite gone, and a deadly paleness had taken its place, but there was no hesitation in her face as she answered, "The professor is very kind, but it is impossible."

I confess I was surprised. I had supposed that if not accepted on the spot, I should be at least taken into consideration.

My former suspicions of Seth Barr were aroused, and I asked, with some frostiness, for I did not like the idea of a rustic rival, "Is there, then, some one else?" A quick, proud motion of the head was the only denial vouchsafed.

"Then why, in Heaven's name, is it impossible? Am I so disagreeable?"

Slowly, as if called up from the depths of long reflection, came her answer: "As an employer the professor is lovable; as a husband he would be detestable."

I started at her emphasis, and answered, with a sarcasm of which I was ashamed in a moment, "You must have studied me closely, and with that possibility in view."

For the first time in our interview Lucy raised her clear eyes to my face, and in their depths I read as plainly as in the handwriting on the wall, "Thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting." For the first time I began to look at myself from her point of view, and to feel exceedingly small.

"Yes," was her grave reply, "I *have* studied you, and with that possibility in view, but not for myself. I fancied that the professor was going to marry Miss Reynolds. I pictured him as her husband, and I found him cold, critical, perhaps hard and sarcastic."

"Don't mince matters," I interrupted. "Call me a selfish prig, as those other girls did; and yet, Lucy, I don't think I have been that to you."

"For myself," she continued, "when I marry, it must be some one who will be proud that I have worked to support myself and my mother. You"—and she turned almost fiercely toward me—"you would be ashamed of it; and that," she went on slowly, "is why I despise you."

It was the first time she had ever addressed me directly, and in spite of the righteous indignation in her voice, it seemed to draw us nearer together. If the text of that confounded letter to you had not risen up to confront me, I would have denied the accusation boldly. I hated you for it—somewhat unreasonably, I confess. As it was, I looked like an idiot, and could find no word to detain her as she rose and said, more falteringly, "I had no right to use the word 'despise.' Forgive it. You have been very kind to me—very considerate, very patient with my blunders. I am going to-day. Good-by."

She was gone, and I was left staring into the bushes in front of me as if I were studying idiotic botany. I felt a good deal as I did after the railroad smash-up. I was bruised to a mental jelly, and my pride was hurt almost as much as my heart; for I saw now what a self-satisfied ass I had appeared in Lucy's eyes, and how infinitely my superior she was in all essentials.

You will smile perhaps when I tell you that the thing which was weighing on my mind more than wounded vanity or heart-break or disappointed hopes was the practical question how the deuce I could pay Lucy what I was owing her. It is a somewhat difficult matter to send a check to a girl who has just declined a share in all your worldly goods. If I should send it alone, it would look like a taunt on her position as my paid subordinate. If I went up to the farm to give it in person, the whole family would be about, and a word in private would be impossible. Clearly I must write a note. Alas! my own hand must suffice now for letters and lectures alike.

Accordingly I returned to the hotel, stalked past the girls on the porch, and sat down in my room to write a line to Lucy. The line grew to a page, the page to a sheet, and the sheet to nearly a quire. Perhaps you would like to know what I said, but you never will. You have food enough now for amusement at my expense.

I am not in the mood just now, however, to care for any one's opinion but hers. I wish she had not said she *despised* me, and yet why shouldn't she? I despise myself whenever I think of the things I put in black and white in that wretched letter to you. Thoughts may wander up and down a man's brain a long while without his ever really sensing their contemptible pettiness, but when they confront him in his own handwriting he is compelled to face them or run away. Hear now my penitent confession of faith: I believe with all my heart in Lucy; I glory in her having earned her living. My income is ample for two—only for her sake I wish it were trebled. My family may say what they please. Whereas I was blind, now I see! In the name of all the Van Vechtens—and you know I believe in ancestor worship—I swear she shall marry me yet. I will never give her up. "Santa Lucia! Santa Lucia!" Yours, faint, yet pursuing,

VAN.

Burn this.

P. S.—The mail has just come in, and brings me a note from Lucy, which I have not courage to open; but here goes—

No, it is not a note. It is simply my check returned without a word. Que faire? M. W. G.

AUNT MAHALAH ON MIND CURE.

"DID you hear anything about mind cure when you were down country, Aunt Mahalah?"

"*Hear* anything! I got right into a nest of it, as you might say, there at Maria's. There were some of her lady boarders that were 'in that thought,' as they called it, and Maria herself was a little touched with it. They went in to Boston twice a week to meet a class in it. Maria has pretty good calculation, you know, and she and three of the boarders set out to learn the business instead of spending the money for treatments, because, you see, when they had got the hang of it, they could treat themselves and their friends. Maria wasn't going to have any more indigestion and headaches, so she thought she could afford the twenty dollars, and save it in pills and phosphates. So we had mind cure for breakfast and dinner and supper, and some of them didn't take much of anything else—that a body ought to eat."

"Why, what do you mean, Aunt Mahalah?"

"You see, some of the apostles insisted upon it that there was 'neither good nor evil in food,' and some said all meat and hearty victuals were unspiritual, and some kind of hinted that if they were only 'advanced enough' they wouldn't be obliged to eat at all. I advised Maria, as solemn as you please, to advance them as fast as she could; but when it got so far as that, she was beginning to be a little afraid of it. So she set to work and made pumpkin-pies and pandowdies and other tempting things herself, for Miss Melcher was living mostly on turnips and greens and hot water, and Miss Folsom dined on rice and curry and malt tea, and Miss Mixer wouldn't touch of anything but cracker and apple-sauce and stewed potatoes."

"What *do* they believe, anyhow?"

"Yes, yes, I've got ahead of my story. That's what I tried to find out myself, and I never did exactly. That woman that had the class was quite pretty appearing and modest, and I used to talk with her when she came out to tea, but I never could quite get hold of her 'mental thought,' as Miss Mixer called it. I run off a notion that the person that was going to be helped must have *faith* in the mind cure; but she said, 'No; put yourself in a passive state, and let the treater do your believing and understanding for you.' When I told Miss Mixer that, she said it would not do at *all:* you must realize that all life was from the Infinite. And when I said I had always s'posed it was, but I didn't see what odds that made about my rheumatism, she turned up her nose. Then Miss Melcher tried to explain to me that the Infinite meant infinite health, and considering that we came from the Infinite, and lived in the Infinite, we must have infinite health too, if we only realized it.

"'Yes,' said I, 'our souls came from the Infinite, and *ought* to live in the Infinite; but these poor mortal bodies—'

"'That's just it,' said Miss Folsom. 'You don't realize, Mrs. Baxter, that the *Ego* has nothing to do with the body—nothing at all. The body is a mere machine, a mere lump of matter, and there can be no disease, no sickness, no medicine. Why, just imagine a machine being sick!'

"'I've seen my sewing-machine in spasms before now, Miss Folsom,' says I. And Miss Melcher couldn't help snickering.

"But Miss Folsom was going to have her say out. 'That is just what I *say*. That is what Dr. Sage says. When you once realize that it's all in the mind, that the body can't be sick, and that the mind lives in the Infinite, and that the Infinite is infinite health, how blind and unreasonable it is to talk of disease as if it were a reality!'

"Well, they did tie it up pretty tight, didn't they? The body couldn't be sick because it was matter, and the mind couldn't be sick because it was mind; but how did they account for cancers and fevers and diphtheria? 'Oh, those are all *appearances* that have deluded the race for so long that the *belief* in sickness is now stronger than the belief in health.'

"Maria never quite went into the finicals of it like the rest, and when I fell back on her for *her* explanation she rather shirked it. She did say, though, that for quite a spell the notion that she *couldn't* be sick was a great prop to her; and it might have been longer only she went it too strong and took an awful 'natural cold,' and *appeared* to have a very bad throat.

"I haven't begun to tell you half the things they said, for it did confuse me considerable; but I can tell you how the mind cure came out with all that family—a straight story, just as it happened, for I watched 'em well, to see how long they could toe the mark. At first they sort of tripped up and down stairs, and they all smiled a good deal, and talked about what a beautiful world this was, and what a sacred and delightful thing it was 'to be in this thought,' and how 'ungrown' and foolish and wicked it was to believe in sickness.

"Miss Folsom left off her glasses, and Miss Melcher went without her rubbers, and Miss Mixer sat on Boards and met committees all day, and went to concerts and lectures at night, and they were never tired nor hungry, nor hot nor cold, nor wet nor dry, I was going to say! That reminds me! There was a lot of mind-cure treaters that came about the house to visit the saints and treat the sinners. One of these treaters was a young woman that had five dollars an hour, and she came rigged up in different clothes every time. One warm day in the spring she said she had been to a Mind-cure Convention in Boston, and there she had seen a most ridiculous sight—a woman waving a fan! She was glad to say there was *only* one. 'The idea that beings living on that high theosophical plane could suffer from heat!'

"Her patient was an old lady that had asthma and heart-disease, and she panted and gasped most of the time, poor thing! Two or three treaters tried her, a two-dollar one and a three-dollar one, and finally this five-dollar one, and they couldn't do a thing with her, any of 'em, because she 'couldn't overcome her belief in her body!'

"Well, I was telling you how these high-flyers cut around on their hot water and turnips and stuff. It wasn't long before *I* could see that they were beginning to look pretty peakèd. One wet day Miss Melcher walked two miles without her rubbers, and then sat nobody knows how long at theosophy meeting. The next morning she didn't come down-stairs. At noon Miss Folsom said that Diana 'appeared' to be sick. By the next day she was in such a way that they broke down and sent for the doctor, and that was the last of Diana Melcher for a good three months. It was typhoid, you see.

"Right in the midst of her sickness word came that a Miss Angell, also a shining light, had *died;* and before they fairly got over that blow, Dr. Lord, the high-priest of the theosophers, who had tried his best to save Miss Angell, had gone after her.

"The weeping sisterhood began to tremble, but the stanch old doctor they had called in for Miss Melcher watched her and fed her and dosed her, and so she pulled through.

"By-'n'-by Miss Mixer fainted away and fell off of a Board she had been sitting on for four or five hours, and when the rest of the committee brought her to, she fainted right away again, and they had a time of it getting her home. She was off the hooks for three or four months, and had two kinds of doctors and three treaters off and on, and I believe she calls herself well now.

"Miss Folsom was awfully dragged out with Diana Melcher's sickness, but she wouldn't own up to anything; but the old doctor had to patch her up in spite of herself. Such a course of beef tea and chops and steak and ale and malt and milk as these ethereal creatures had to submit to must have been good for their souls, *I* think.

"Well, you would have thought that was enough, but there was more to come. Dr. Sage dropped dead on his door-step one day. Organic disease of the heart. And don't you think! that nice little woman that had the class took to the spiritualizing business so strong that after five or six months of living on air and ecstatics she got so run down that one of her friends telegraphed to her husband unbeknown. He was out West, and he came back pretty quick, for he thought the world and all of his wife, and what did she do but faint away in his arms, and had to go right to bed, and have a regular doctor, and be fed up like her patients.

"But the awfulest thing was their 'chemicalization.' One of the believers had hemorrhages, and she ought to have had a real knowing doctor to see to her. When she had a terrible one the treaters didn't have the sense to be scared, but they said it was 'chemicalization,' and she was doing beautiful; but two or three days after that she died."

"I should thought they could 'a been arrested."

"Well, no, father, not by the police; but by the time they were all sick, or dead, or coming to their senses, they were, as you might say, arrested."

"I wouldn't 'a believed folks could be such geese."

"Well, that's the singular part of it. They were real clever folks, and had considerable faculty, some of them. They were always trying to do good, and always on the keen jump to get hold of a new thing that was going to help humanity. It was kind of amusing and refreshing to be with them, if you could only stand stiff enough not to get blown away with their gales of doctrine. And they *did* get something out of their mind cure, after all. There was that Miss Folsom that had been ailing and doctoring for twenty-five years, and had settled down into kind of fretty ways, it gave her a shaking up she'll never get over."

"Did you know of *one* out-and-out cure, Aunt Mahalah?"

"Just one, and I've saved that on purpose for the last. There was a Miss Henry there—a beautiful, still kind of a girl—and Maria told me her history, between *us*, you know; the others didn't

know anything about it. You see, this Miss Henry began to teach when she was eighteen, and pretty soon she got a situation in Washington. One of the great men there was beginning to be very attentive to her, and all of a sudden he was found dead in his bed one morning. And the poor thing liked him, I expect, and she didn't exactly know how much he liked her, because he hadn't really *said*, only hung round a good deal. So her heart just broke, Maria thinks, and the next thing was to hide away the pieces. And the way she took was to work herself to death as fast as she could. When she got so she couldn't eat or sleep she *had* to stop work, and then she nearly went insane. But she had real grit, and after she had tried all the opathies, and been better and worse, in the most discouraging way, for eight or ten years, a mind-cure woman gave her a few ideas that seemed to lift her right out of her slough of despond. She had the good sense to clinch it by going right to work as much as she could. She took a poor situation to teach two or three little children, and she's been improving right along in a reasonable and steady kind of way for more than a year, and I think *she'll* stand the test. I heard of several other cases, but this is the only one I *know* of my own knowledge, and it's what any doctor might be willing to call a beautiful case."

PREMONITION.

HOW did she know? He had not said
That he would come that day; he wrote
No single line; and yet she knew
Without a word, without a note.

The breezes knew it, and they told
Her heart, although they seemed so dumb;
So she put on her prettiest gown,
And then—he didn't come.

A. W. R.

THE HUGHES GIRLS' AUCTION.

THE house stood on a corner that had become valuable business property, as real estate went in the little Kentucky village. Adjoining it was a dry-goods store; next to that, Bulletsville's one grocery; and across the street loomed a tobacco warehouse that seemed to look down with an amused smile on the tiny dwelling daring to hold its own against the onslaughts of traffic.

The house was an unpainted frame one, whose hue had become a sodden blackish-gray, further darkened in way of contrast by the lines of dazzling white that marked the six small panes of glass in each unshuttered window. Behind the windows were dark green shades with broad bands of dull silver running around the margin. There was one room upstairs; of the two below, the front one opened directly into a bit of yard whose fence seemed encroaching on the window-sill; a faint shimmer of grass was beginning to show itself in the enclosed space, and with the single door-step scrubbed to a nicety which showed gaping grains in the wood, the yard was a very respectable place to sit in on summer nights, when every one in town came "out front."

The only incongruous thing about the place was a large bill posted beside the door, announcing that this desirable house, together with its complete stock of furniture, was to be sold at auction on a certain date.

Every little while the door was opened slightly, and a woman's face stole out far enough to see the placard. In one of these outlooks the woman advanced over the threshold with less caution, and reaching out a large bony hand, rubbed her forefinger against the edge of the bill.

She was over fifty, tall and gaunt, clad in a black alpaca gown cut low at the throat in an old-time fashion which permitted the use of a wide needle-worked collar. Her nose, being of the Roman variety, contrasted oddly with a small, weak chin, and with two childish rows of thin gray curls hanging around the sinewy neck.

She took a pin from her dress bosom and scratched the paper; then she shook her head and closed her lips into a gray line.

"It's dry," she whispered; "it's plumb dry, an' boun' ter stick. I reckon—thet I'm right glad they put it up with good paste."

"Ma'y Bell," said a voice from within the house, "I 'low I wouldn't stan' out thar; folks er anxious ter fin' out all they kin, an' your face 'll tell 'em a heap more'n we want 'em ter know."

"I jes calkerlated ter see ef it looked like rain fer ter-morrer," said Mary Bell, as she stepped back into the room, closing the door behind her.

There was a greenish gloom in the place, for the curtains were down, but it could not hide the careful disorder of everything. A rag carpet lay in a neat pile in one corner, four hair-cloth chairs stood back to back in an orderly row, and on a marble-top table in the centre of the room was a collection of small articles with numbers pasted on them ready for the auctioneer.

In the tiny kitchen opening out of the front room a woman stood reaching glasses of jelly down from the top shelf of the closet. She was somewhat older than Mary Bell, but her counterpart in every respect, save that there was a squareness about the lower part of her face lacking in her sister's.

"This black curran' jell I reckon Mis' Ames 'll buy," she said, placing some jars on the table. "She's never hed no luck doin' up fruit, an' her folks goes a heap on p'sarves. I'd ruther some un else 'd get 'em, fer I never hed no use fer Mis' Ames: she wuz a Hines, an' the Hineses wuz the no-'countes' folks I 'most ever see."

Mary Bell sighed. "When we ergreed ter break up an' go ter boardin', I hed no idee thet ev'ything 'd hev ter be sold; I don't see yit why we couldn't ha' divided 'em."

The other turned on her almost fiercely. "Things er already divided," she said, sternly; "a house divided amongst itse'f kinnot stand; we hev Scrip'ure fer thet. They's on'y one bedroom in this house, an' we can't both sleep in it with our ideas on ventilation diff'rin' ez they do; we can't one of us move out, 'cuz folks 'd talk—we went over thet long ago; so the on'ies' thing ter do is whut we're goin' ter do—sell the house an' ev'ything in it, an' each of us go whur she feels like."

Mary Bell's face grew harder as her sister spoke; she sat down in a stiff-backed wooden rocker with a rheumatic jerk. "Thet's one comfort, Sereny," she said, with a quivering at one corner of her mouth; "I want ter go whur I don't hev ter take no orders off'n nobody, an' whur I kin go ter bed at night with the winder shet, an' no fear o' burglars er pinch-bugs er ketchin' cold ter ha'nt me."

Serena laughed shortly. "An' gettin' all sorts o' diseases from breathin' back your own p'isonous breath! Gi' me a open winder the year roun' an' plenty o' fresh air a-streamin' in; but fer the law's sakes don't let's get ter goin' over thet ground agin'!" she exclaimed, as Mary Bell essayed to speak.

"You're goin' ter board with Green Clay Adkins's folks, an' I'm goin' ter stop a spell at Cousin Sary Henderson's down ter Frankfort, an' we kin do ez we please. Let's get ter work now."

"You'd better pack these p'sarves in the settin'-room awhile, Ma'y Bell, fer they'll be passels ter do in the mornin'; the auctioneer'll be hyere at eight o'clock p'cise."

Mary Bell got up slowly and began to arrange the glasses in rows on the high black mantel-piece; she was accustomed to obey Serena, and did not think of rebelling in small matters.

For twenty years, since their mother's death, the sisters had lived harmoniously together; then a book agent had induced them to buy a book of hygiene, which he said contained rules of health which, if followed, would prolong human life indefinitely. Mary Bell found nothing of interest in this volume, but the older sister pored over it as she had never done over the weekly paper or family Bible, and she followed its dictates, to the sacrifice of her own and her sister's comfort.

The book in its crimson binding lay on the photograph album in the front room, and seemed to flaunt itself in Mary Bell's face every time she brought in a new supply of jars.

"Whoever buys it I hope 'll get good of it," she thought; "I never set nothin' by it, an' I ain't a-goin' ter resk my life triflin' with its fool notions ter please no one." Then she said to Serena, "You're goin' ter let the *Home Doctor* go 'long o' the rest, are you, Sereny?"

"I ain't goin' ter keep nothin'," declared Serena, with emphasis—"not one thing, though thar's things hyere I shell hate ter see go out o' the fam'ly; hyere's this blue chiny teapot o' mother's, now—I min' well the las' time ever she used it! 'Sereny,' she sez, 'put the kettle over, an' when the water biles, make me a dish o' tea in the chiny teapot your paw gin me when we furs went ter house-keepin' down in Rowan County; ef thar's anything I kin put ter my mouth afore I die, it 'll be some tea brewed in thet pot.'"

Serena's voice had grown husky, and the little nervous tremor quivered again about Mary Bell's lips.

"But it 'll hev ter go," resumed Serena, clearing her throat, "fer neither on us hez any more right to it than the other. I kinder hope Mis' Ames won't get hol' of it; she's a mighty pore housekeeper, an' them boys o' hern 'd break it up in no time; they'd wan' ter han'le it 'cuz it hez Chinee men on it, an' mighty pale-complected they look, too—an' no wonder, fer the *Home Doctor* sez the Chinee people sleep ez many ez forty in a cubby-hole, an' not a smitch o' air."

"Too much air is a heap worse 'n none, I 'bout reckon," responded Mary Bell, with a toss of her head; and over the tenderer memories arose the shadow of their estrangement.

Serena shut the closet door with a snap like closing jaws, and Mary Bell went to the front door again, though this time she did not touch the placard.

It had rained at intervals during the day, and some few drops were gleaming slantwise in the air; the sky had been gray and dark, but it was of a warmer tint now, as if cheered by a prophecy of setting sunlight. Far off the low hills rose, dim, misty, and varying in hue so little from the sky itself as to look like a great earth-born cloud merging upward; here and there on the bare branches of the poplars were strong white lights where the glance of the departing day fell on them. Some shining little pools flickered in depressions of the worn pavement.

And now, as the yellow tone faded from the sky, lights began to show lurid haze—encircled radiance from the houses; and mingling with the drop and tinkle of the slight rain were heard voices of the twilight—mothers calling their little ones, children responding with shrill halloes, and the stronger tones of men jesting with each other as they hurried home from work.

There was a lump in Mary Bell's throat as she turned back into the house, lighter with its single candle than the world outside, for night had breathed upon the distant dwellings now and filmed them in an unfathomable blue-gray mist.

Serena was arranging the evening meal on the kitchen table. "I jedged we might ez well hev a soon supper, an' be done with it," she said as they sat down.

Afterward they washed the dishes, fastened the windows, each with a nail fitted into a hole over the lower sash, and went up the steep narrow stairs to bed. The blinds were carefully drawn, and night toilets made; each washed her face in buttermilk, and fastened a net over her crop of wasted ringlets. Then they lay stiffly down side by side, with the window slightly open, by way of compromise.

It was day when Serena awoke from a nap which had only fallen upon her weary brain toward morning; she saw that Mary Bell was sleeping quietly, so she moved softly to the window and sat awhile looking out, and wondering dimly if any other place would ever wear so sweetly familiar an aspect. The clear morning air revealed things in broad masses of light and shade; over the bit of grass the fence cast its semblance in long, distinct lines, and the naked branches were, every twig of them, half black, half white.

Very soon after breakfast the neighbors began to arrive, for an auction was not an event to be lightly considered in so small a place. They were mostly women who had come to get a piece of furniture that might "go cheap," or some of the china dishes which the Hughes girls were known to have; later on, when the house itself was to be sold, the men of the town would attend.

Mary Bell and Serena, in their best gowns of thin crinkled black silk, received the people with the subdued air of mourners in a house of death. Each of them held a starched white handkerchief in her folded hands. They had not spoken to each other since getting up, but they stood close together, lest any one should imagine there was any ill feeling animating them.

Presently a little woman with pale eyes and light red hair fluttered up. "How d'e do, Miss Hughes?" she said, shrilly. "'Pears like you-all are goin' ter hev a pretty day fer the sale. I sez ter Ames this mo'nin'—'Ames,' I sez, 'I'm goin' ter pick up an' go ter the auction, an' I'll buy some o' them jells you set sech a heap by.' I never wuz raised ter do sech-all things myse'f; bein's ez our folks hed niggers, I never ez much ez turned my han' ter do a lick till I got married. An'—oh yes! I reckon I'll hev ter bid on thet bluish teapot yander; a-course 'tain't sizable 'nough fer my fambly, but my Johnny he don't gi' me no rest a-pesterin' fer a savin's-bank—he's a likely one fer four year—an' I tole him this mo'nin', 'You, John, ef you'll hesh that mouth o' yourn, I'll look 'roun' ter the Hughes's fer a ole-style tea-caddy er somethin' thet ain't much 'count, an' fetch yer it fer a bank.'"

Serena swallowed a gulp of indignation; Mary Bell, with the odd jerking at her lips, said that it was not likely that a china teapot would go for nothing.

Then Squire Tolliver, the auctioneer, came in, red-faced and blustering, and inclined to be very humorous.

"H'y're ye, Miss Hughes—purty lively this mo'nin'?" he asked, genially.

Serena raised her gray head with a movement which set the little curls twitching like coils of fine wire. "Folks don't genully feel over-lively at a sale," she said, coldly.

"Law, now, Miss Sereny, I didn't go ter hurt your feelin's nohow; jes my way o' speakin'. Blame 'f I don't hate ter do this hyere business—feel middlin' like an ondertaker; you-all hev lived right chere ever sence I wuz knee-high ter a duck, an' I 'spise on the face o' the yearth ter sell you out—blame 'f I don't."

Serena accepted his apologies in chilling silence.

He began operations in the kitchen, and the sisters could hear eager voices bidding on the tin-ware they had polished for years. Then Mr. Tolliver announced that while he had his hand in he would put up the dishes, and "get shet o' thet business."

"Hyere now's a thing thet you ladies will 'preciate: a rale chiny teapot made in the celebrated factories o' the Hesperides. How much am I bid fer this article which cheers but not inebriates, ez the bard hez it? Twenty cents?—no, 'm; I'm sellin' the teapot, not the lid on'y. Thirty cents I am bid—thirty-five—make it forty, Mis' Ames. Thet's right; forty—forty—forty—"

In the front room Serena sat listening; her face seemed older by years since the sale had begun. When the teapot became the object of barter, she pressed a closed hand against her lips and stole a cautious glance at her sister. The stiff handkerchief had fallen from Mary Bell's hands, and she sat gazing into the kitchen with strained, vacant eyes.

"Ma'y Bell!" said Serena, suddenly, "shell our maw's teapot go fer forty cents ter be a play-toy fer the Ames young uns?"

Mary Bell's head fell limply forward. "No, no," she said, tremulously. "I can't get up—my knees er give way like, but you bid it in, Sereny. I feel like I'll die ef these-all folks don't go 'way. Sen' 'em away, Sereny—they's on'y you 'n' me lef', two pore he'pless ole women—an' I'll do whutever you say, Sereny."

"Goin' fer forty cents ter Mis'—"

"'Tain't goin' fer thet, Squire Tolliver," said Serena, walking quietly into the kitchen. "I don't like the prices things 're bringin', an' we've decided not ter sell."

"But, my dear Miss Hughes, we can't do business that a-way."

"I'll pay fer your trouble; a-course I don't want you ter be nothin' out; but I reckon no one kin sell these things without the owners' say-so."

It was some time before the surprised throng wholly withdrew, but at last the sisters were alone.

"Ma'y Bell!"

"Yes, sis' Sereny."

"We'll jes take off these gownds, an' put on our dark blue calicoes, an' pitch in an' rid up this house. I'll get the red bucket full o' water, an' take the oldes' scrubbin'-brush, an' wash down that notice right off. I feel ez excited ez ef it wuz house-cleanin' time—don't you?"

"'Deed I do; I'm jes sick ter get hol' of a broom. But first off, sis' Sereny, we'll h'ist the upstairs winder an' air the room; likely it's rale close up there, bein' shet up so. I shouldn't wonder ef more fresh air 'd do me right smart o' good. I reckon I'll like it a passel arter I get used ter it."

Serena bent on her sister a look of tenderness. "You see thet *Home Doctor*, Ma'y Bell? Well, I'm goin' ter kindle a fire onder it and burn it hide 'n' hair. Min', I don't say ventilation ain't a good thing—a mighty good thing—but it's better ter hev a easy mind than a healthy body, ef you hev ter pick an' choose betwixt 'em."

EVA WILDER MCGLASSON.

THE CHRONICLE OF THE FIRE.

I HAVEN'T—God help me!—the schooling o' men
Who run off their words at the end of a pen:
You can go to the clerk or the squire, if you choose,
To hear a long story that reads like the news.
A plain-spoken fellow, a farmer, am I,
Who works for his neighbors if wages are high;
I stick to the fields where my father was bred,
And take down my pipe when the boys are in bed.

When I was a youngster, some twenty years past,
There wasn't a mower could foot it so fast;
The first at the shearing, the last at the show,
I could carve out an axe-helve or handle a bow.
I remember the fall that I turned twenty-one—
I was waiting on Molly and wild after fun—
I'd go to the huskings from here to the Sound,
And tune up my fiddle to give them a round.

'Twas the night after 'lection I played in the ball:
The squire's little daughter was there with them all—
As brown as a gypsy, as wild as a jay,
But trusty and fearless, and frank as the day.
She danced with young Chase, from the saw-mill below,
Who 'listed and left in the winter, you know;
If he spoke to the others, they'd laugh and look down:
He was only a foundling, and raised by the town.

Well, six or eight winters had come and gone by—
It was just before Christmas, and snow in the sky;
I had foddered the cattle and done up my chores,
And was thankful enough to be easy in-doors;
The setter was snoring, and dazed with the heat,
And Molly was busy with porridge and meat,
When some one come knocking—a stranger, he said,
And ready to pay us for supper and bed.

Well, that was a night! 'twas so thick with the storm
That a man might get lost on his grandfather's farm,
And so, though the fellow was wrapped to his chin,
I said he was welcome, and better step in.
He was queer-looking too, as I'm bound to confess—
Some six feet or more in his stockings, I guess;
He had eyes like a whip-lash, and blue as the bay,
And his hair and his beard were the color of hay.

Now of all the fine stories you ever heard spun,
You wouldn't find any to beat what he'd done:
He'd fought for the darkies, and crossed through the lines,
And worked with the gang that was lost in the mines.
He sang and he whistled so loud and so sweet
The dog seemed to hearken and whined at his feet:
When, nigh about midnight, we heard a great cry,
And see the folks running, an' fire in the sky.

Well, that was a night! from the roof to the bays
The squire's old red barn was one billow of blaze;
The snow was all bright in the circle it lit,
And the oats in the bin made a heat like the pit.
But the noise from the stables an' stanchions below!
The neighing an' squealing an' cackle an' crow!
The stranger was there with a voice like a drum—
Gone straight for the critters the moment he come.

He brought out the cows an' the sheep from the shed—
Call it reason or witchcraft, they went where he led;
The smoke was so thick that we daren't go near,
And the horses were plunging an' frantic with fear:
How he held in them colts I could never see plain,
But Est'er's bay pony he held by the mane:
As he spoke to her twice, an' she shook an' stood still,
I saw like a flash—it was Chase o' the mill!

Well, the barn was burned down. But the fire didn't run,
And the boys were half wild when they heard what he'd done.
He was pretty well scorched, but he liked it, I s'pose,
For Est'er, she nursed him—you see how it goes!
They live down below since the track was put through:
He's in charge of the found'ry, an' smart as a Jew—
But I say, when he'll talk fit to make a man young,
"You've need to be thankful you've got such a tongue!"

DORA READ GOODALE.